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PERIODICALS DEPARTMENT

EDITORIAL

POSSIBLE DREAMERS

Politics is merely the business of the possible; it is the art of the impossible. When miracles happen—as they did when a black won the Chicago Democratic mayoralty primary and a socialist Mayor won re-election by a landslide in Burlington, Vermont—they lift the dreary political process to the rank of creative endeavor.

The nature of art subverts all attempts to find formulas that will fit every work, and it would be futile to look for replicable rules in the Chicago and Burlington campaigns. Representative Harold Washington (as Andrew Patner points out in his analysis on page 294) achieved his victory by mobilizing a vast, cohesive, self-conscious black population, alienated from the traditional urban politics of a racist, indifferent Democratic Party structure. Mayor Bernie Sanders of Burlington made a virtue of his eccentricity and independence in a state that cherishes those qualities. But if Washington's and Sanders's victories do not yield formulas, they do contain some useful lessons.

First, as the party system crumbles, independents can play increasingly important roles in American politics—provided they identify the real needs of an unrepresented constituency. In the wake of Washington's win, black leaders are thinking about a black Presidential candidate whose campaign would focus on the concerns of minorities and poor people.

Second, mobilization may count more than media in coming campaigns. This is poli-sci heresy, but both Sanders and Washington overcame their rivals' big press and celebrity support by organizing an active, loyal base.

And finally, the power elite is not invincible. Most candidates' victories are handed to them by power brokers and corporate captains; Washington and Sanders made their victories the old-fashioned way: they earned them.

WASHINGTON'S WIN
Andrew Patner

ZIMBABWE
Aryeh Neier

'DANTON' IN PARIS
Daniel Singer

SOLIDARITY WITH THE SANDINISTS
Günter Grass

IN SEARCH OF JAMES M. CAIN
Gary Giddins

THE BEAUTY PART
Anna Shapiro

N.C.C. UNDER FIRE

THE RIGHT'S RELIGIOUS RED ALERT

CYNTHIA BROWN

The "leftism" of the National Council of Churches is once again a hot story. "Investigations" of the organization's support for liberal causes have in the past two years appeared in *Reader's Digest* and *The New York Times* and on the Public Broadcasting System and CBS's *60 Minutes*. The theme of the criticism is always the same: why is a nice organization of thirty-two mainline Protestant churches with 40 million parishioners supporting flaming Red causes like gay rights, forced busing and revolution in El Salvador?

The substance of the charges is geared to the 1980s, but the style, by now a hallmark of the Reagan Administration, is reminiscent of the 1950s. No unscrupulous Senator from Wisconsin rallies the troops today, however. Leading the battle is a fundamentalist conservative coalition called the Institute on Religion and Democracy. The I.R.D., its leaders would no doubt proudly agree, is the source of much of the criticism of the N.C.C. that has appeared in the media.

The Institute on Religion and Democracy was founded in April 1981. It claims 800 members and in its press releases bills itself as an organization of "prominent religious leaders and theologians." The institute describes itself as a nonpartisan centrist organization, and its November 1981 statement of principles announces: "The debate is not between liberals and conservatives, between Left and Right. The debate is between those who do believe and do not believe that there is a necessary linkage between Christian faith and human freedom."

(*Continued on Page 303*)

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LETTERS.

BAN THE BUNNIES

Kenwood, Calif.

As a magazine that shows concern for issues of importance to women, it seems out of character for *The Nation* to run an advertisement for the Playboy First Amendment Awards [Feb. 5]. Certainly, those who enhance and protect the rights provided by the First Amendment deserve recognition; however, the Playboy Foundation is not the proper source for that recognition.

The advertisement's placement in *The Nation* gives credibility and acclaim to an organization that works against the rights of women. Through a clever and liberal editorial stance, *Playboy* has furthered the objectification and exploitation of women. Since *Playboy* has made millions off women's bodies it can now afford to spend a few dollars in a public relations game to increase its respectability and its profits.

Surely *The Nation*—which sees through a lot of political trickery—can see through the Hugh Hefner awards. I hope that *The Nation* will take a stand and refuse to accept any such advertisements in the future, thereby ceasing to lend the magazine's prestige to the continuing exploitation of women.

Judy Helfand

FEMINISTS AND SEXISM

Amherst, Mass.

It's a pity that Carol McMillan's *Women, Reason and Nature* was given to someone so ill equipped to handle its philosophic subtleties as Barbara Ehrenreich ["Are Feminists Sexist?" *The Nation*, Feb. 12]. The distortions in her review are so many and go so deep that it would be impossible, in the space *The Nation* allots to letters, to respond to them all. But I must say a few words, in part because Ehrenreich indicts me along with McMillan's book. My sin was to write "the sole blurb" for *Women, Reason and Nature*. This blurb, which Ehrenreich does not quote, preferring slurs and innuendo, reads as follows:

> Carol McMillan argues provocatively that feminists have mistakenly seen as liberation the "freeing" of women from the "bonds of nature" by technological means. Turning to thinkers important in articulating the terms of interpretive theory, particularly Wittgenstein and Peter Winch, she develops a finely honed and important book that represents one of the most vital areas of contemporary social philosophy.

As every social theorist knows, one need not accept every *particular* evaluation a perspective yields to appreciate the salient points which that perspective offers. McMillan's important point is that "it is a rationalist prejudice that masculine activities depend on agency in a way that traditional, feminine activities do not." In other words, in accepting the valorization of traditionally male-dominated and -defined activities as paradigmatic of agency and reason itself, (some) feminists and (most) sexists wind up sharing the same conceptual ground. Much recent feminist scholarship makes precisely this point. Perhaps Ehrenreich is too busy distinguishing what is or is not a "feminist" account, and excommunicating women accordingly, to keep up with important new works in women's studies. (See, for example, L.J. Jordanova's essay in *Nature, Culture and Gender*, edited by Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern.)

One other item: in a gratuitous aside taking the form of a "factoid," Ehrenreich claims that I have argued that female activists "should clamor, from the security of their kitchens, for increased male wages." This is a falsehood, and a damaging one. There is no evidence to support it. When I argued (in an essay Ehrenreich apparently has in mind) for a "living family wage," I intentionally did not specify a sex-linked wage. My point, which I should think would be readily available to anyone who claims the imprimatur of Marx, is that capitalism constitutes all human beings as wage earners (the interchangeability of labor), thereby eroding the texture of human social relations. I aim to challenge, not acquiesce in, a system that atomizes all human beings.

Jean Bethke Elshtain

EHRENREICH REPLIES

New York City

Jean Bethke Elshtain is right about one thing. I am indeed ill equipped as a philosophy critic and not even licensed as a social theorist. But there is always a danger that works of high scholarship will fall into the hands of laypersons like myself, who are dumb enough to mistake profundity for malarkey. Elshtain should have thought of this before lending her name to McMillan's peculiar enterprise.

As for the "distortions," "slurs and innuendo," "gratuitous asides" and other indications of umbrage: readers who want the full factoids are referred to the book under review (which speaks for itself), Elshtain's article "Feminism, Family and Community" in the fall issue of *Dissent*, my response in the winter issue and her response to *my* response in that same issue.

Barbara Ehrenreich

P.S. Jean, we can't go on meeting this way, in the back pages of *Dissent* and in the letters column of *The Nation*. How about a head-on debate (you choose the publication), or at least a cup of coffee?

CRY OF THE PEOPLE

The following is a letter sent by a group of Salvadorans at the Mesa Grande refugee camp near San Marcos, Honduras, to Pope John Paul II in anticipation of his current visit to Central America. —*The Editors*

Your Holiness John Paul II,

On behalf of 9,000 Salvadoran refugees, in the name of God and our suffering people, we wish you a happy new year and hope that you receive this letter in good health in your labor as universal pastor.

We write to you to describe the suffering of the people who have been torn away from their land because they have sought justice. We encounter only pain and suffering day after day. Many are the children, women and old people who have been massacred by the government. The government has also stripped us of our land and burned our humble homes. We hope to return to our country with the help of God and your support. We want to return to a new country in peace, justice and security—not the military security of a repressive government but the security that comes from our own people. We ask you, successor of Saint Peter, to intercede against the armed intervention of the United States in aid of the Central American governments that are the authors of our misery. We also need more international support in the refugee camps because even here there is repression, even here people sometimes "disappear."

At this time we also need the solidarity of all churches. On learning of your visit to Central America, we were deeply moved and very happy. We would like to know if it is possible during your trip to Honduras to visit our camps so that you will know our situation and so that we can be in your presence. And we ask that you support more strongly the example of Monsignor Oscar Romero. We believe that the mission of Monsignor Romero was the same as the mission of the prophets, and we ask your support of the pastoral letter from the bishops of Honduras. Please excuse our many requests, but we ask you to intercede on behalf of the political prisoners so that they might have liberty.

These are the desires of the committee of refugee women, the mothers of assassinated children and wives of assassinated husbands. We have been suffering for five years. There have been moments when we have had nothing to eat but wild roots. This is a small testimony of our bitter suffering, and we take leave of you with the hope of your response.

EMENDATION

The name of the publisher of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lectures on Don Quixote* was left out of Ronald De Feo's review ["Deconstructing the Don," March 5]. The book is published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

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EDITORIALS.

El Salvador Again

America's dirty little war in El Salvador has for several years been limited to relatively thin transfusions of money and matériel, the dispatch of a light brigade of military advisers and inexpensive expressions of moral support for the murderous regimes in power in San Salvador. But the war is going badly. The insurgents' seasonal offensive, which began in January this year, has put government troops to rout and has depleted their stocks of U.S. weapons and ammunition. The guerrillas have partial control of three mountainous provinces, and areas close to the capital itself are now sharply contested. The government's position is deteriorating so rapidly that Defense Secretary Weinberger and Gen. John Vessey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently warned a House committee that El Salvador was ready to "fall" to rebel forces. As a result, the little war may soon get a lot bigger—and dirtier.

So unstable is the situation in El Salvador that the Reagan Administration must act quickly merely to maintain its preeminent influence in the country's affairs. It has two immediate options: a diplomatic offensive to effect a negotiated settlement or a military campaign to defeat the revolution. The former was broached by Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Thomas Enders before the President's National Security Council—and it was quickly dismissed. The policy makers apparently believe that the rebels are too strong to be trusted to keep their place in any power-sharing relationship with the government. Congress has demanded that American aid to El Salvador be linked to the Salvadoran government's willingness to negotiate, but Secretary of State Shultz now refuses to let the guerrillas

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"shoot their way into the government" via peace talks. Shultz's concern, of course, is not the shooting but the government; he would deny the insurgents the role that their power naturally gives them.

That leaves the military option uniquely possible, if not pleasant to contemplate. President Reagan floated a number of garish trial balloons on the subject last week. He asked for an additional $60 million in military aid to El Salvador (more than double the amount he called for a month ago) and, during the flight from Washington to greet Queen Elizabeth in California, one of his retinue said the Administration would consider expanding both the size and the scope of the U.S. advisers' mission.

Without the Americanization of the war, the Salvadoran Army seems destined for defeat. Only three battalions, consisting of about 5,000 soldiers in all, are U.S.-trained and considered effective fighting units. They must be shuttled about from one remote combat zone to another in response to guerrilla attacks, and the wear and tear is showing. Last month, the guerrillas routed the "elite" Ramon Belloso battalion from the strategic town of Perquin, only seventy-five miles from the capital. The rest of the ragtag army is undisciplined and unmotivated. Patrols will not go out at night for fear of ambush, and those units that are sent out during the day often slip into the countryside and never return.

U.S. military aid is of little help. American officials in El Salvador say the guerrillas have captured all the weapons they need to maintain the current level of fighting; the army loses its equipment as fast as it is issued (despite the Salvadoran government's proud but pathetic denials). Undertaking construction projects is pointless. "There's no use in building roads and bridges if they're going to be blown up the next day," Weinberger told Congress.

Faced with such dismal facts, the Administration seems prepared to push for a military strategy that makes use of two special resources the United States can readily offer the Salvadoran government: counterinsurgency training and high-tech weaponry. According to longtime analysts of the military situation, one likely scenario calls for the Salvadoran Army to "abandon" and "retreat" from the mountainous provinces of Morazán, Cabañas and Chalatenango, and to embark on an air war against the village populations there. That would require beefing up the modest Salvadoran Air Force with attack planes, pilots and bases. To that end, the United States might try to widen the war by involving Honduras, which has the largest air force in Central America, stocked and trained by Israel. Or it might become directly involved in the air campaign.

On the ground, the counterinsurgency war would employ the traditional methods used by commando bands to terrorize the countryside: murder, torture, arson. If it sounds reminiscent of the war in Vietnam, that indeed is the model—that and Somoza's war against the Sandinists in Nicaragua. One would think that the memory of those two disastrous enterprises would have a chilling effect on the Reagan Administration, if not on the Salvadoran government. But even losing generals—and politicians—have a habit of fighting their last wars one more time.

Orpheus Ascendant

If there is a Poets' Heaven, we hope it has an angel at the gate whose duty it is to intercept the residents' obituaries and throw them away. There ought to be some advantage to being dead, and we'd like to think that Tennessee Williams, who died on February 25, is being spared the spectacle of our nation's critics as they indulge in their favorite pastime: nodding sagely and preening themselves over a great writer's failure to have lived as soberly as a college president and to have written masterpieces as regularly as the goose laid golden eggs.

"It seems only too ironic that the last Tennessee Williams play to be seen on Broadway, 'Clothes for a Summer Hotel,' in 1980, was an attempt to exhume the ghost of F. Scott Fitzgerald. For what writer more than Mr. Williams exemplified Fitzgerald's notion that there are no second acts to American lives?" muses Frank Rich, drama critic for *The New York Times*, in an "appreciation" gloatingly titled "A Playwright Whose Greatest Act Was His First." We wish we had a dollar for every time a critic beats a writer over the head with that Fitzgerald quote—as though no critic had ever lost the edge of *his* youthful gifts and energy and continued his career on automatic pilot. Why assume that it is the natural state of things for a writer to churn out masterpieces year after year after year, as though poems and plays and novels came, or ought to come, out of the same practical, industrious, day-to-day approach to words as reviews of poems and plays and novels?

Literature is not "copy." The plays for which Williams will be remembered—*A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*—are not the "first act" of some mysteriously unfinished life in art—they *are* that life. They transformed the American stage, they purified our language, they changed the way we see ourselves. None of his later plays, however erratic they may have been, diminish that accomplishment by so much as a hair.

A poet, wrote Randall Jarrell, "is someone who manages, in a lifetime of standing out in thunderstorms, to be struck by lightning five or six times." Critics, who spend their lives shod in leaden galoshes and sheltered under leaden umbrellas, ought not to forget that.

Zimbabwe's Agony

Some 30,000 died in the bitter and brutal racial war that was needed to transform Rhodesia into Zimbabwe. Yet when I visited the country in mid-February, relations between the races on the streets of the capital city of Harare seemed extraordinarily easygoing. Despite the absence of a democratic tradition, Zimbabwe has been functioning as a constitutional democracy. And Robert Mugabe, Joshua Nkomo and Ian Smith have sat together in the Zimbabwean Parliament for the past three years conducting Westminster-style debates about public policy.

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Nasty guerrilla wars against oppressors have been fought in many parts of the world in the past few decades. No other place comes to mind, however, where the government that emerged has appeared to be so committed to national reconciliation and to respect for human rights. This makes the army's killing of civilians in the province of Matabeleland all the more distressing. One hates to see a government that has been so decent behave so badly.

It is difficult, of course, to assess the seriousness of the provocation that moved the Mugabe government to launch a military campaign against armed followers of Joshua Nkomo. Certainly, however, the "dissidents," as these rebels have been misleadingly labeled by the government, have caused enough mayhem that Mugabe cannot be faulted for sending the army in pursuit. Unfortunately, as has happened in other countries, the army seems to have massacred civilians out of frustration at its inability to capture the rebels.

A possible consequence of Prime Minister Mugabe's troops' depredations is that the rebellion will spread, plunging the country again into the nightmare from which it apparently had awakened. At this point, the best hope is that the Prime Minister's formidable good sense will prevent that from happening. An all-out effort to crush the "dissidents" may be tempting, but a peaceful solution—which might have to include restoring Nkomo to a position of authority—would better serve the country's future.

The United States could help by dissuading South Africa from capitalizing on Zimbabwe's current woes. The South African government has been very busy lately trying to destabilize its neighbors. Though there is no evidence that South Africa has had a hand in the strife in Matabeleland, it is likely that the powers in Pretoria are thinking seriously about how best to exploit the situation to their advantage. It is urgent that the United States try to prevent South Africa from exercising its considerable power to disrupt the already troubled Zimbabwean economy, as it appears to have attempted a few months ago when oil storage tanks were blown up and a pipeline was sabotaged.

Prime Minister Mugabe's government is too culpable for the present crisis to warrant outright support. But its record before the crisis was too good to warrant the conclusion that he is another rebel leader turned tyrant. For now, the best course for the United States is to press for a peaceful settlement and to urge Mugabe to live up to the standards he set in his first two and a half years.

ARYEH NEIER

Aryeh Neier is a member of The Nation*'s editorial board.*

Devilish Idea

On a recent visit to Bedford, Massachusetts, President Reagan touched on a subject close to his heart before hoisting a stein with the guys in a working-class bar: tax breaks for the rich. Inveighing against "double taxation" of profits and stock dividends, he suggested that the corporate income tax be abolished. "Why isn't the so-called corporate tax simply passed on to the stockholder?" he asked. "Corporations are owned by people. They should pay the tax as individuals."

The President's advisers were reportedly dismayed by his poor timing in raising the subject while on a junket designed to dramatize his concern for job training and high-tech industry, and his proposal was quickly buried. Actually, his idea was a good one—though not for the reasons the President had in mind.

Under the present tax law, it is to the advantage of individual shareholders, most of whom are in high tax brackets, that corporate profits be reinvested by management, since corporate income is taxed at a much lower rate

IN-HOUSE NOTES

The April 9 issue of *The Nation* will be devoted to a single subject: the New Arms Technology. This special issue was conceived and edited in consultation with Michael T. Klare, a fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies whose writings on defense have appeared frequently in *The Nation*. Contributors include Mary Kaldor, with an introductory essay on worldwide armament developments; Chris Paine on the Administration's nuclear strategy; Klare on "near nukes"—the revolutionary arms technology that will erase the line between nuclear and nonnuclear weapons; William Arkin and Peter Pringle on the reasons behind the military's rush to improve "C3" (command, control and communications) systems; Thomas Karas on the Pentagon's plans to militarize outer space; Stan Norris on the military applications of "exotic" technology, e.g. robotics; and Richard Barnet on the political implications of the new weaponry.

We hope this preview of things to come in *The Nation* will keep your thoughts weaponsward long enough to fire off a letter urging your Representative to vote for the nuclear freeze resolution, which the House will vote on within the next few weeks.

And now a word to subscribers from our publisher:

In the next week or so you will receive a special letter inviting you to become a Nation Associate. The Nation Associates is composed of individual *Nation* readers who provide critical support for the magazine through modest annual contributions.

We rely on the Associates to help us meet the enormous cost of independent journalism. If you aren't already a member, please give serious consideration to joining this special group of friends of *The Nation*.

Hamilton Fish 3rd

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than personal income. Moreover, when earnings are reinvested, a corporation's net worth is increased, and the value of each individual share goes up. When a corporation raises capital by issuing new stock, the shareholder's equity is diluted.

Because the corporate income tax generates less revenue and upper-bracket shareholders escape some taxes on their dividends, taxpayers in the middle and lower brackets must take up the slack. If there were a law requiring that corporate profits be passed on to shareholders, wealthy people would assume a fairer share of the tax burden, making the tax system more equitable and broadening the base.

Even more important would be the effect of such a law on how corporate investment decisions are made. When corporate earnings are reinvested, only top management need approve the uses to which they are put—whether it is to buy new machinery or to buy out another firm. The workers and communities affected by these decisions have no say. But if corporations passed their earnings on to shareholders, they would have to raise money on the capital markets, and management's investment decisions would be subjected to the judgment of the market. Also, proposed investments would undergo advance scrutiny. Their impact on workers, communities, the environment and consumers would be revealed rather than concealed in the boardroom. Making corporate planning visible would be a major step toward making corporations accountable to society.

It is no surprise that the President's comments were allowed to die quietly. But his idea is worth keeping alive. As Martin Luther remarked when he was rebuked for setting hymns to popular music: "I never understood why the devil should have all the good tunes." SUMNER M. ROSEN

Sumner M. Rosen is an associate professor of social work at the Columbia University School of Social Work.

Washington's Win

When U.S. Representative Harold Washington announced his candidacy for mayor only three months before Chicago's February 22 Democratic primary, he called for the formation of a minority-white coalition to defeat the entrenched machine. The response from most white liberals was silence, however, and his victory is an object lesson that urban black candidates can go it alone and win.

Washington's failure to attract white liberal support became dramatically clear after he appointed 72-year-old Edwin C. (Bill) Berry chairman of his steering committee. Berry had been director of the Chicago Urban League during the 1950s and 1960s and had worked with members of the white business community (indeed, some black radicals criticized him for his friendships within the power structure). Berry discovered, however, that the businessmen and liberals who are willing to give money to the Urban League feel differently about giving to a black mayoral candidate. Admitting defeat, Berry told the steering committee that he could not raise enough money "to guarantee a fair debate."

"I have concluded sadly," he went on, "that racism is much deeper than all my study had led me to believe. Those who said they believed in decency and democracy were phony and lying. They were willing to help in a small way [in the 1960s], but they balked at helping us to change our status." Ultimately, less than 10 percent of Washington's $1.1 million campaign fund came from white contributors.

The national media played down Washington's candidacy, and the local press dismissed his chances of winning. (Chicago's two major papers backed Cook County State's Attorney Richard Daley.) Indeed, Washington was such an invisible man that Teddy Kennedy and Walter Mondale rushed to embrace his rivals. Kennedy endorsed Mayor Jane Byrne because of her support of his 1980 Presidential bid, and Mondale backed Daley. Mondale's action angered Washington, since in 1980 he had delivered a 93 percent vote for the Carter-Mondale ticket in his First Congressional District. Said Washington, "People can no longer take from my community without giving back. Mr. Mondale has some serious explaining to do."

When Washington saw that whites were resisting his overtures, he moved to solidify his base of support in the black community. Leading black businessmen contributed cash and loaned employees to the campaign. Additional help came from black activists and journalists and a handful of whites.

Washington's central task was to harness black resentment of Byrne and turn it into a positive force. That is, he had to organize the black community to elect a mayor rather than just to reject one. Pointing to the success of recent voter registration drives, which brought the number of registered blacks to about 650,000, Washington pounded home the message that "the numbers are there."

The first hint that this message was taking root came on February 6, when more than 14,000 Washington supporters packed a Near West Side hall in what was perhaps the largest voluntarily attended campaign rally in the city's history. February was Black History Month, and the dominant theme of the speeches was black pride. The motivating force of Washington's candidacy had emerged: pride. When he told the crowd, "We've waited patiently, voted for white candidates over and over. It's our turn now!" pandemonium erupted in the hall.

Washington received more than 420,000 votes, or 36.5 percent of a record 77 percent turnout. Byrne trailed by 36,000 votes and Daley by 79,000. Washington garnered 82 percent of the black vote; even though he had campaigned on issues that most directly concern the city's poor, he had strong support in the black middle-class wards, where he received 85 percent of the totals.

Byrne received about 14 percent of the black vote, and Daley about 4 percent. (A question frequently raised in the press during the campaign was, Could Washington govern without substantial white support? No one, however, asked if Daley could govern without black support.) Washington won about 8 percent of the white vote citywide; in the ethnic

(*Continued on Page 303*)

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CALVIN TRILLIN

Those who think that our family is a bit listless about looking after our financial affairs are apparently unaware of the sort of effort we put into the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes every year. We really go for it. We do our homework. We play hardball. We keep our eyes on the bottom line. We always lose.

"I think this year we should leverage our options," I said when the Publishers Clearing House Million Dollar Sweeps entry arrived in the mail a couple of months ago.

"What does that mean?" my younger daughter, Sarah, asked.

"Your mother can explain the details," I said. "I'm strictly an idea man."

I'm the one who had the idea about entering sweepstakes in the first place. Sarah, who is 11, hasn't come up with any sound investment strategies since she got stymied trying to fill out the entry form for a drawing some beer company was holding for a new Pontiac Trans Am ("What should I put for business phone?"). It's natural for me to have a lot of ideas about these matters because I know a number of Wall Street millionaires. As it happens, every single person in the lower third of my college class—every single person, that is, except Blinko Moshler, who's a prominent lawyer in Toledo, and Dalt Durfee, who is the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Asian Economic Affairs—is a Wall Street millionaire. I occasionally run into one of them, usually at some restaurant I can't really afford. They're always talking about leveraging their options, or maybe optioning their leverages; ask my wife if you want the details.

They also talk a lot about what they're getting out of and what they're getting into. "I just got out of the market and into shrimp boats," one of the millionaires said when I came across a brace of them at an East Side nouvelle cuisine joint that seemed to be charging the price of a shrimp boat for three cold shrimp and a heart-shaped raspberry.

"I just got out of shrimp boats and into boxcars," said the other one—someone I'll call Martin G. Cashflow. In his crowd, Cashflow is known for having just got out of whatever it is that everyone else is about to get into. Cashflow also happens to be one of those trendy millionaires who gets in and out of fads at the same time he's getting in and out of investments, so sometimes he's getting out of backgammon and into cattle ranches or into Sufism and out of discount plumbing supplies. Cashflow is the person who told me a long time ago that my problem was that writers are labor in a labor-intensive industry.

"I just got out of the New York State Instant Lotto and into the Reader's Digest Sweepstakes," I said. When they looked unimpressed, I assured them that I was savvy enough to have marked my entry form in a way that kept my name in the sweepstakes without obligating me to sign up at the special sweepstakes rate for a subscription to *Reader's Digest* for life plus ninety-nine years. I don't subscribe to any magazines. Some time after Cashflow told me that my problem was being labor in a labor-intensive industry, he told me that the smart money got out of magazines and into software years ago, at around the same time he got out of silver futures and into the Maharaj Ji. ("I don't think I want to get into software," I said at the time, thinking that it had something to do with linen napkins. "Kid, you *are* software," Cashflow replied. "That's your problem.") I figured there was nothing much I could do about writing for magazines—unless, of course, the big New Jersey Lottery number does turn out one year to be my Army serial number with the last two digits reversed for good luck—but I was at least smart enough not to subscribe to any.

This year, we had a family meeting about the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes. We sat at the dining room table, with sharpened pencils and clean white memo pads in front of us. "How's the little-bitty sticker end holding up, Sarah?" I asked. In our operation, Sarah is the specialist in how to figure out which little-bitty sticker is supposed to be pasted where on the entry blank.

"Piece of cake," Sarah said.

With Sarah trouble-shooting the little-bitty sticker end, I figured, the main decision we had facing us was which of the three superprizes we wanted—a certified check for $250,000, a $250,000 custom-built dream home or $40,000 a year for ten years.

"How do the numbers look on that one, Abigail?" I asked my older daughter.

"Ten times 40,000 is 400,000, Daddy," Abigail said. "Don't you remember what I told you about just adding a zero on the tens table?"

"But the question is whether we want to go for the ten-year payout or get the two-fifty up front and get that money working for us," I said.

"I'd rather have a Pontiac Trans Am," Sarah said.

"O.K., we'll meet again as soon as I figure out which option gives us the most leverage," I said, trying to imagine how Martin Cashflow would end a meeting. "I'll have my girl get back to your girl."

"But Daddy," Abigail said, "we *are* your girls."

I spent the next weeks trying to answer the questions that would allow us to eyeball a ballpark figure on the bottom line, or something like that. Is a $250,000 custom-built dream home the sort of thing Cashflow has in mind when he goes on about shelters? Aren't all $250,000 dream homes custom built, or do some people have prefabricated dreams? In ten years, will $40,000 buy a Pontiac Trans Am? How about a Mars bar? I was thinking about such questions when my wife pointed out that entries to the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes had been due four days before ("You forgot to assign someone the deadline end"). I still had questions. If we decided to take the up-front cash and get it working for us, how many Instant Lotto tickets would $250,000 buy? What could "leverage your options" possibly mean?

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SOVIETICUS.

STEPHEN F. COHEN

Joseph Stalin died thirty years ago, on March 5, 1953, but he remains a deeply divisive and potent force in Soviet political life. On every anniversary of Stalin's death, vodka glasses are raised in Soviet households. Many are hoisted in worshipful toasts to the memory of "our great leader who made the Motherland strong." Many others are lifted to rejoice again over the death of "the greatest criminal our country has known."

The Stalin controversy grows out of the dual nature of his long rule, from 1929 to 1953. Pro-Stalin citizens remember the country's towering achievements under his strong leadership: the Soviet Union became an industrial society, defeated the mighty Nazi invader in World War II and rose to rival the United States as a world power. To these people, Stalin will always be the nation's great modernizer, Generalissimo and statesman.

Anti-Stalinists, on the other hand, refuse to forgive the equally towering mountain of his crimes. Stalin's policies created a Soviet holocaust, from the savage collectivization of the peasantry between 1929 and 1933 to the murderous system of police terror that victimized millions of innocent men, women and even children until 1953. At least 20 million Soviet citizens died as a result of those policies. And that is a conservative estimate. Nor does it include millions of unnecessary wartime casualties or the at least 8 million tormented souls who languished in Stalin's labor camps. For anti-Stalinists, "there is no longer any place in our soul for a justification of his evil deeds."

Soviet policy has already undergone two dramatic turnabouts on this bitter controversy since Stalin's death. Three years after speakers at the state funeral eulogized Stalin's "immortal name," Nikita Khrushchev launched an anti-Stalin campaign as part of his reform policies. By the early 1960s, the Khrushchev administration had publicly charged Stalin with "monstrous crimes" and "mass repressions," assaulted his once "infallible" leadership, stripped his name from thousands of memorials and removed his body from the Lenin Mausoleum.

But Khrushchev's anti-Stalinism stirred up increasingly powerful opposition in official circles, on the grounds that it created a "negative attitude toward all authority" and "spit on the history of our country." Such sentiments played a large role in Khrushchev's overthrow in 1964 and in the subsequent defamation of his name.

They also help to explain the official rehabilitation of Stalin's reputation, symbolized by the marble bust placed on his grave behind the mausoleum in 1970. By the 1980s, under Leonid Brezhnev, the Stalin years had been restored as a "heroic and positive" era in Soviet history, and Stalin himself, despite some "mistakes" still attributed to him, rehabilitated as a wise national leader and benefactor. Indeed, some Soviet publications have even justified Stalin's mass terror as a necessary "struggle against destructive and nihilistic elements."

The most important byproduct of Stalin's rehabilitation has been the remarkable comeback of the Soviet political police, now called the K.G.B. Khrushchev sharply reduced the size and role of the K.G.B., while his exposés of the twenty-year terror left it badly discredited as the agent of Stalin's "monstrous crimes." Under Brezhnev, however, a major effort was made, in a flood of popular fiction, memoirs and films, to restore the K.G.B.'s authority by romanticizing its wartime and foreign operations.

The success of that effort is now clear. In 1953, Stalin's successors arrested and executed his longtime police chief, Lavrenty Beria. Thirty years later, Brezhnev's successors made his longtime K.G.B. chief, Yuri Andropov, the new Soviet leader.

These developments do not portend a return to Stalinist terror, but they do make possible a revival of a more despotic form of leadership. Much pro-Stalin sentiment, in officialdom and in society, is a reaction to problems of declining productivity, shortages and bureaucratic corruption, and to the perceived weak leadership of Brezhnev's last years. Such problems cast a nostalgic glow over the Stalin era as a time when there was a "strong boss" and "we did not have such troubles." And they undoubtedly tempt Soviet leaders to try more draconian solutions, in line with an old Russian tradition that Pushkin called "the charms of the whip," as is suggested by Andropov's current campaign to instill "discipline" through police harassment of truant workers and bureaucrats.

But the upsurge of pro-Stalinism does not mean that anti-Stalinism is dead. Depleted and aged, the generation that still clings to supreme power in the Soviet system, including Andropov himself, rose rapidly and traumatically in politics to fill vacancies created by Stalin's terror. The upcoming generation of top officials will have less reason to be silent about Stalin's crimes, but will also be less able to associate themselves with his epic achievements.

Those leaders may find Khrushchev's anti-Stalinism tempting for two reasons. First, the hypercentralized economic system, which no longer works effectively, is the product of the Stalin era. Any fundamental reform of that system will therefore require both official criticism of the Stalinist past and, to overcome conservative opposition, a reformist ideology. And anti-Stalinism remains the only viable ideology of Communist reform, as it was under Khrushchev. If favorable references to him in an authoritative Soviet journal this January are an indication, Soviet citizens have not heard the last of the unduly maligned and nearly forgotten Khrushchev.

No less important, justice is a moral idea without a statute of limitations. For almost two decades, truth-telling about Stalin's mountainous crimes has been banished from officialdom and left in the hands of a dwindling band of dissidents. But Soviet leaders know from their experience since Stalin's death that censoring the past causes historical controversy to fester politically. Eventually, they must respond again to the saying, which still circulates in Moscow, "Tell me your opinion about our Stalinist past, and I'll know who you are."

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ARTICLES.

LETTER FROM EUROPE

The Revolution Seen Through a Glass Darkly

DANIEL SINGER

Paris

A film beginning with a shot of a little boy being beaten for not having learned the Declaration of the Rights of Man by heart, and closing in the overwhelming shadow of the guillotine, provides an opportunity to preach a sermon on the vanity of all revolutions. It is a golden opportunity if the director is famous and comes in from the cold, allowing the Russian Revolution to be damned together with the French. No wonder *Danton*, the latest film of the Polish director Andrzej Wajda, got a great deal of politically motivated praise here in Paris. (Wajda, incidentally, received a César—the French equivalent of an Oscar—as the best director of the year.) But the film also provoked controversy. In France the 1789 Revolution is no longer regarded as a bogy. It has been admitted, though in a bowdlerized version, into the national heritage. Wajda's hopeless vision of that upheaval was bound to shock, and it came under attack from the left. Elsewhere, the film may not meet the same kind of opposition; hence this letter, written not by a film critic but by somebody unfashionably interested in the radical transformation of society.

Since I am going to be highly critical of Wajda's *Danton*, with its antirevolutionary message, let me disclaim at once some of the possible reasons for hostility. I am not against Solidarity, and I viewed the rebirth of the Polish labor movement from 1970 on as one of the few rays of hope on the political horizon. I have nothing against Wajda, either. I am an admirer of the sweep and subtlety of the director of *Kanal* and *Ashes and Diamonds*. I disagreed with those who called *Promised Land*, his film about the industrialization of Lodz (the Polish Manchester), anti-Semitic. I thought that the principal characters—a German, a Polish Jew and a Polish Catholic—were equally revolting specimens of capitalists; all of them exuded the ugly smell of success.

Actually, *Promised Land* contained a different political message. It was Wajda looking backward rather than forward. The film's ending—a strike in which many workers are shot—seemed tacked on, unrelated to what had come before. It was what the French call "hair in the soup." Wajda more successfully and less melodramatically contrasted capitalistic corruption with the nostalgically drawn figures of the hero's fiancée and his father. Though historically doomed, the minor nobility, the *szlachta*, seemed pure and beautiful by comparison. Wajda's indictment of the degrading power of money in *Promised Land* had more in common with *Crime and Punishment* than with *Das Kapital*.

His monumental *Man of Marble*, on the other hand, is a masterpiece of socialist realism in the true and not Zhdanovian sense of the term. Wajda did not blink at the evils of Stalinism in Poland as he related the saga of Mateusz Birkut, the sincere Stakhanovite, from his youth in the early days of postwar reconstruction to his violent death in the Lenin Shipyard revolt in 1970. But the film is finally a tribute to the Polish working class. Wajda, like Birkut, who in one scene votes the party ticket despite the government's shortcomings as the peasants in his native village watch, appeared to have faith that his country would somehow emerge from the Stalinist night. The glorious summer of 1980, when Solidarity was formed, vindicated that faith.

Wajda's next film, *Man of Iron*, though artistically less successful than *Man of Marble*, is a moving portrayal of the beginning of the Solidarity movement. It tells of Birkut's son, Tomczyk, and his contemporaries, a generation to whom, briefly, everything seemed possible. Then General Jaruzelski's tanks rolled into Warsaw and Solidarity's flame was snuffed out. Wajda's hopes were shattered, and his bitter disappointment has colored his vision of the French Revolution in *Danton*.

There is nothing wrong with looking at the past through the prism of the present. One can try to learn from history, and one can also impose on it the lessons of one's own experience. The French Revolution provides a striking

DRAWINGS BY RANDALL ENOS

Daniel Singer is The Nation*'s European correspondent. He is the author of* The Road to Gdansk *(Monthly Review Press).*

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example of this two-way process, this interaction between past and present. The Bolsheviks often argued passionately by analogy. They were haunted by the reign of the guillotine and feared a Thermidorian reaction (taken from 9 Thermidor, or July 27, 1794, the date of the coup that brought Robespierre down), to be followed by an advent of Bonapartism. But the Russian Revolution also had an impact on the interpretation of its French predecessor. The conflict between the radical "Mountain" and the moderate Girondists was understood in the light of the clash between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. And the rise of the Byzantine cult of Stalin, whose extermination of opponents on both the left and the right had to be justified, meant that Communists had to contribute to the cult of Robespierre.

These historical debates are not remote from *Danton*. Wajda's film is based on a play first performed in 1931, *The Danton Affair*, by Stanislawa Przybyszewska. At the time she wrote the play, Przybyszewska was a Communist sympathizer. According to the rumor in Paris, *The Danton Affair* was pro-Robespierre. Wajda, however, altered it to make Danton the hero.

But Wajda's film does not proclaim *Vive Danton*; it is too busy cursing all revolutions. Also, to my mind at least, the French actor Gérard Depardieu, who plays Danton, is utterly bewildering. True, Danton too was mighty and had a stentorian voice. Yet there is a difference between an attorney having the shape of a football player and a football player playing the role of an attorney, especially if he clowns his way through the part. At the end, when he tells the executioner, "Show my head to the people, it is worth looking at," one is left wondering how this rather grotesque person became a major figure in the revolutionary drama.

But the weakness of the film does not lie in the casting. The central flaw is Wajda's omission of the historical backdrop. The historian Jules Michelet argued that the Revolution "could not stop terror, when the whole world was applying it against France." But in the film, there is nothing about the war with Britain; there is nothing about the conflict between the old feudal order and the rising bourgeoisie, nothing about religious tensions or the curious alliance between the new propertied class and the have-nots of the Commune of Paris. There are a few shots of people standing in line, but there are virtually no crowd scenes. The film lacks a social echo, and without it, the speeches in the National Convention (which are drawn from contemporary documents) sound hollow. The guillotine is working madly in the void.

It will be objected that Wajda's intention was not to make a historical epic. He could have just as validly filmed a dramatized play, focusing on the personal confrontation between Robespierre, ruthless and incorruptible, bent on carrying the Revolution forward at any price, and Danton, the moderate, seeking to halt the terror and the social change. Such a version, though oversimplified, would have made some sense.

But Wajda makes no attempt to explain these two men. Ideology is conspicuous by its absence. This lacuna shows up most strikingly in the way Robespierre's supporter Saint-Just is portrayed in the film. This extraordinary young man, known as the "archangel of death," argued that "to make a revolution by half is to dig one's own tomb" but also that "happiness is a new idea in Europe." In the film, Saint-Just is a nonentity. Robespierre himself is not clearly defined. He makes one interesting remark—that if Danton is not killed the Revolution is finished, but if he is it is also doomed—but this thought is never developed or explained further.

Quite apart from my dislike of Depardieu's interpretation of Danton, the character is given little of importance to say. In a central scene, he mocks Robespierre as a man who knows nothing about the people and proclaims himself their representative. Actually, both men were middle-class lawyers with similar backgrounds. To understand why they stood together at first and eventually parted company one would have to examine the conflicts between the factions of the French bourgeoisie at various stages in the Revolution. But Wajda does not really care about this, since he regards the entire revolutionary process as sinister and absurd.

Are the shots of people standing in bread lines the only Polish connection in the film? During showings of *Danton* in Warsaw, passages like the one in which Danton's ally Desmoulins hails freedom of the press will certainly stir the audience. But otherwise, Poles will see little that bears directly on their problems. One might read into Wajda's depiction of Robespierre, rigid and dressed fastidiously, a reference to General Jaruzelski, who stands ramrod straight and who is always spick-and-span, but coincidence is a likelier explanation. It would be an insult to Wajda to suggest that he equated Poland's miserable military dictator with a major figure of the French Revolution. We must accept his public denials of all such analogies at face value. Indeed, the only possible connection with Poland is the filmmaker's own disillusionment, which resulted in the bias that dominates the film from start to finish.

In Wajda's version of the French Revolution, it is not the Catholic Church which is pushing its catechism down the throats of poor, innocent kids. Rather it is the government that force-feeds them the Declaration of the Rights of Man. His Revolution shatters no social barriers, frees no peasants, gives no hope to the have-nots. It is reduced to the image of the guillotine. It takes as its text Vergnaud's hackneyed dictum about revolutions, like Saturn, devouring their children, without trying to explain why this is so. It is difficult to understand why Danton (or Trotsky for that matter, if you care to make the dubious historical analogy) did not fight back earlier and more successfully unless one takes into account the counterrevolutionary forces gathering behind him. Recall his common struggle with Robespierre not just against the monarchy but also against the left, against the Enragés months earlier and the Hébertists days earlier. Without the historical background, the slaughter on the screen leaves the spectator cold; one is a mere onlooker watching beautifully filmed images. How

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could a great director have so little to say? And more important, did the events of the Revolution, as *Danton* suggests, all happen without rhyme or reason?

After seeing the movie, I returned home and went immediately to the shelves of my library where I keep my collection of books on the French Revolution. I found many conflicting theories about why it failed, reflecting the political views of the historians. Only Michelet, whose facts are sometimes questionable but whose insights are fascinating and whose writing is superb, offers any surprises. Alphonse Aulard, who did so much research with revolutionary documents, was a radical of the Third Republic who attempted to show that the Revolution was the precursor of the progressive bourgeois republic. His sympathies were with Danton, which was not uncommon among pro-revolutionary French historians. (Robespierre was never admitted into the republican pantheon. The British establishment may be more ashamed of its head chopping and its Glorious Revolution, but there are probably more Cromwell Roads in Britain than streets bearing the name of Robespierre in France.)

In the next generation of historians on the left there were Albert Mathiez and his school. They believed that Danton had sold out—that he was in the pay of the Court and then of the British. In their eyes, Robespierre could do no wrong, even when he attacked the plebeians of Paris, under the theory, often revived, that the ultraleft served the Revolution's enemies. But the extremists—the "wild ones," Jacques Roux, Varlet, the Enragés, Babeuf and his Conspiracy of Equals—also have their defenders. At the beginning of this century, Kropotkin, the Russian anarchist, wrote of the Revolution from the angle of peasants and urban have-nots, and just after World War II, Daniel Guerin published his ambitious *Class Struggles Under the First Republic*. Both Kropotkin and Guerin portrayed the "ultras" as the forerunners of a genuine socialist revolution. In addition to these interpretations there are the socialist history of Jean Jaurès and the more recent works of Georges Lefebvre and Albert Soboul. So there is much to choose from and, for anyone but a reactionary, no need to go back to bloodthirsty gods and the vision of revolution as a malediction.

Only on two points is there any need for revision—the present catching up with the past. First, it was once easy for a Marxist to explain away the irrational aspects of the French Revolution by saying it was a bourgeois upheaval, an alliance between property holders and proletarians. Such a coalition was bound to come apart. Equality cannot be established through a conspiracy. The most progressive elements, representing the urban poor and the peasants, could not carry the day because society was not ripe for their victory as a class. Because of its contradictions, the Revolution had to masquerade in Roman disguises. A true socialist revolution, Marxists said, would avoid such travesties. It would be democratic, supported by a majority of the exploited; it would act and speak rationally; it would require no guillotine and fear no Thermidor. We know what actually happened in the Russian Revolution, and to say that a socialist revolution was not supposed to take place in a backward country is not an adequate explanation of its betrayal of socialist ideals.

The first point leads to the second. There was a time when it seemed sufficient to argue that revolutions should fight their enemies and not devour their children, that they are justified in attacking the right and mistaken in attacking the left. But once the mincing machine is set in motion it keeps on chopping, and that compels us to re-examine such concepts as the party, the active minority, the revolutionary vanguard; to ponder the links between ends and means, between the way power is seized and the way it is exercised. But to re-examine does not mean to give up or to yield to the fashionable hypocrisy of abstract moralizing. To reappraise the revolutionary results need not mean idealizing France's *ancien régime*, Czarist Russia or Pilsudski's Poland; it does not mean forgetting war, imperialism and foreign intervention or stressing the "red" terror while ignoring the "white" terror. As Brecht put it: "One blames the swift current for its violence, but no one speaks of any violence when the banks tighten the current between them." The left has every reason to initiate a debate about the differences between reform and revolution, about the efficacy of change from above versus upheaval from below—*provided* that it is not dragged into enemy territory and into that never-never land outside the realm of history where all cheats can be preachers. For understandable reasons, Adrzej Wajda seems to have been led astray into this land of distorted abstraction.

Eighteenth-century France will continue to fascinate students of revolution. Only five years elapsed between the fall of the Bastille and the death of Robespierre. During this short span of time alliances were forged and broken, men popped up and disappeared against a background of tremendous social change. It all happened so quickly that the main actors were youngsters compared with the rulers of present-day "postrevolutionary" societies. According to Michelet's *History of the French Revolution*, Desmoulins was 33 when he went to the guillotine, "the age of Jesus the *sans-culotte*." And Danton—"I am thirty-five," he said before his death. "My abode tomorrow will be nothingness; my name will remain in the pantheon of history." (In fact, Desmoulins was 34 when he was executed, and Danton was not yet 35.)

The seething drama of the French Revolution has captured the imagination of playwrights as well as historians. Surprisingly, it has attracted few great filmmakers. It figures only episodically in Abel Gance's *Napoleon* and is reduced to the role of a mild ancestor of the Popular Front in Jean Renoir's *La Marseillaise*. Was Wajda fit to fill the gap? Certainly not in his despondent mood. He would have had a better chance of succeeding if he had understood that all politics in the Soviet bloc have been post-Thermidorian for a very long time. In this phase, Jaruzelski stands for despotic rule, and the shipyard workers of Gdansk—like the Parisian "ultras"—are the forerunners of the revolutions of tomorrow. □

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SUPERPOWER BACKYARDS

Solidarity With The Sandinists

GÜNTER GRASS

Central America is the backyard of the United States. The Mexican saying—"My poor Mexico, how far you are from God, and how close to the United States!"—applies to these five small republics. Nicaragua was our destination—"our" being myself, Franz Alt, Johano Strasser, Ute Grass, the publisher Hermann Schultz and Dora Weidhaas, who served as the delegation's interpreter. We came at the invitation of the Minister of Culture, the poet and priest Ernesto Cardenal, and of Sergio Ramírez, also a writer and a member of the junta. We arrived with no fixed ideas about Nicaragua, and we left, eight days later, deeply changed.

My own knowledge of Nicaragua was drawn largely from books. I was sympathetic to the revolution, but also skeptical. What would 21-year-old guerrilla commanders, fresh from fighting in the jungles and the streets, know about running a country? How long would it be before this revolution began to eat its children, as revolutions have done throughout history? Spiritually as well as geographically, I felt closer to the Solidarity movement in Poland.

Actually, as I see now, Solidarity and the Sandinists have much in common. Poland's fears of intervention by the Soviet Union have their counterpart in Nicaragua's fears of intervention by the United States. In spite of the distance that separates the two countries, they have similar relationships to the superpower that dominates their part of the world. The United States seeks to undermine the Sandinists and yet calls itself the protector of Solidarity—and is seen as such by many misguided people in Poland. The Soviet Union portrays itself as the protector of freedom movements in the Third World—and is mistakenly believed to be that by many Nicaraguans. In Nicaragua, the misinformation spread by Tass, the Soviet news agency, that Solidarity is counterrevolutionary is believed. Voice of America broadcasts tell Poles that Nicaragua will soon be firmly in the orbit of Cuba and the Soviet Union. And so the covert "hate-the-Russians" sentiment in Poland corresponds to the overt "hate-the-Yankees" opinion in Nicaragua.

I have visited both Poland and Nicaragua within the past year, and I know how dangerous and stupid the two superpowers are as they go about dominating the countries in their backyards. But in the cases of Nicaragua and Poland, they will meet strong resistance. It is a kind of resistance the superpowers cannot understand, and it stems from the fact that the Solidarity and Sandinist movements are both socialistic and Catholic. More: they possess an early-Christian simplicity and directness unlike the conventional forms of political power.

To even a skeptic like myself, the thought occurs that Rosa Luxemburg has appeared as the Virgin Mary to the Poles—and the Holy Mother as Rosa Luxemburg to the Nicaraguans. These two spontaneous movements mock the rigid cold-war ideology of the Americans and the Central Committee Leninism of the Russians. The revolution that was suppressed in Poland won in Nicaragua three years ago, and it still survives and believes in its future.

There are political prisoners in Nicaragua—former members of Anastasio Somoza's National Guard, guilty of burning villages and killing people. When we asked about them, Interior Minister Tomás Borge, who at 52 is an elder statesman of the revolutionary government, immediately suggested that we visit Tipitapa prison.

Every prison is horrifying as an embodiment of the belief that people have the right to lock up their fellows, but Tipitapa is a far cry from Somoza's torture chambers. There is no capital punishment in Nicaragua, and the Sandinists at least attempt to impose humane punishments. No other Third World country employs such methods, which are modeled after those used in Scandinavia.

There are several hundred former Guardsmen in Tipitapa prison. Some have been convicted of murder and torture. The prisoners work five days a week, building a hospital and two new wings with larger cells. Saturdays and Sundays are visiting days, and friends and relatives may come as often as they like and stay for three or four hours. There are special facilities for conjugal visits. When questioned by us, the inmates expressed their grievances freely—they complained about the shortage of quarters for conjugal visits, the lack of radios, the difficulty relatives in Managua and more distant villages have getting the fare to visit them.

Tomás Borge made himself available to hear the prisoners' questions and demands. He had spent five years in this prison and had experienced Somoza-style penology. He was kept in chains with a hood covering his head for nine months; he was tortured over a three-month span. It is customary for the victors of a revolution to take revenge on the survivors of the old order. But Borge does not believe in repaying injustice with injustice. "If we take revenge," he told us, "we will lose the victory of the revolution. Our revolution means renunciation of revenge."

"But didn't the revolutionary soldiers also pillage and torture out of revenge?" we asked. "Yes," Borge replied. "More than 700 Sandinists have been imprisoned thus far for excesses like these. They plundered and tortured and some of them even committed murder."

Convicted Sandinists receive the same punishment as imprisoned National Guardsmen. Most of the Guardsmen fled, of course, in the wake of their defeat, and more than 5,000 now operate along the border with Honduras, armed and supplied by the United States and reinforced by units trained in Miami. They conduct raids, burn down villages and try to establish bases on Nicaraguan soil. Their aim is to incite a war between Nicaragua and Honduras, which could spread

Günter Grass, the West German novelist, is author of The Tin Drum, The Flounder *and other books.*

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across all of Central America. If such a war broke out, President Reagan would bear the primary responsibility.

(On the flight to Managua, we had an unexpected layover in Miami. We rented a car and drove to two of the training camps for Cuban exiles and Somocistas south of Miami Beach. One of them was hidden behind mounds of garbage; the other was behind a fence with a metal sign on the gate reading: "FBI Area." The penalty for unauthorized entry is ten years in prison and a $10,000 fine.)

The U.S. government is not morally entitled to condemn the Soviet Union's aggression in Afghanistan or its pressure on Poland. Almost to the end it protected and bolstered with economic aid the murderous Somoza (and his father before him), and gave him guns and ammunition in the war against the Sandinists. Now, in an attempt to destabilize the government, it has cut off all economic assistance and has halted the delivery of spare parts for U.S.-made equipment. And it is financing the Somocistas' guerrilla war against Nicaragua.

All this I knew before I made the trip, but in Nicaragua I saw it more clearly—and began to feel ashamed that the United States is an ally of my country. I wish West Germany would renounce that alliance—and not only because of American aggression against Nicaragua. The members of the Atlantic alliance are expected to accept quietly or even condone every action of their protector. America's aggressions, like those of the Soviet Union, have become pervasive, and they can no longer be excused as stupidity. Because I support both Solidarity and the Sandinists I cannot remain indifferent to the wrongs done them by Russia and the United States.

How impoverished must a country be before it is not a threat to the U.S. government? Nicaragua has only 2.5 million people, most of them concentrated in Managua and a few towns. Somoza left an evil legacy: a looted treasury, a $1.6 billion foreign debt and a capital city still bearing the scars of the 1972 earthquake (the money donated for reconstruction lined the pockets of the Somoza family). More than 300,000 people live in Managua's slums; Lake Managua has been turned into a cesspool; and the country's economic dependence is growing (last year exports totaled $500 million, and imports—of necessities only—totaled $850 million).

The prices that Nicaragua's main exports—coffee, cotton, sugar—fetch on the world market have fallen. Before the revolution, 100 pounds of coffee brought $163; today they bring only $140. In sharp contrast, the prices of imported goods, from the simplest tools to farm machinery, have soared. Half of the country's staple foods—corn and beans—must be imported. The interest payments on loans from foreign banks add a crushing burden—and the loans are not nearly enough. Despite rising production, the country faces bankruptcy by 1985.

The Minister for Agrarian Reform, Jaime Wheelock, and the Minister for Interior Trade, Dionisio Marenco, briefed our group on economic matters. These two young men have been forced to acquire expertise in a hurry. They described the nation's economic goals in pragmatic terms, free from revolutionary rhetoric. Both praised the Sandinist "mixed economy," under which 20 percent of the land is owned by the state, 30 percent by the private sector and 50 percent by cooperatives.

Wheelock took us on a tour of two cooperatives, which are located on land formerly owned by the Somoza family. The farmers had never owned land before. Five thousand peasants have received title to their own plots since the Sandinists took power. We asked several farmers what was the biggest change the revolution had wrought in their lives, and their answers told us more about the necessity for the revolution than any party programs or theoretical arguments could. Before the revolution, they said, we worked hard yet we had nothing. Now we work harder—but the land is ours.

In nearly every farmer's hut hangs a picture of Augusto César Sandino, the farmer-general who is the father of the revolution. Beside it there is often a religious picture, usually of the Virgin Mary. To the poor—in Poland and in Nicaragua—religion provides emotional support and hope.

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In Nicaragua, some of those hopes have been redeemed, but the people's religious faith remains strong. It has, however, become more down-to-earth, more secular, in the spirit of Catholic liberationist theology. Sandinism is not opposed to Catholicism, and many priests work in the government. A new progressive Christianity is sweeping Latin America, and the Catholic hierarchy eyes it suspiciously or rejects it entirely. The Archbishop of Managua has been outspoken in his opposition to the Sandinists. He threatens his parishioners with excommunication and foments strife within the church. His divisive actions have added to the country's problems. The Sandinist leadership has reacted to the Archbishop's provocations unwisely and oversensitively, which has made the situation worse. And a letter from Pope John Paul II to Nicaragua's bishops supporting the conservative clergy's antigovernment stand has exacerbated church-state tensions.

Polish Pope—Wojtyla! You are much traveled and sympathetic to the world's sufferings. Are the poor, the sick and the persecuted still close to your heart, as you proved they were in Poland? Will you oppose the smug, the powerful and the oppressors of the people—some of them cardinals and bishops in your own church? Will you understand that Sandinism and Solidarity have common roots—though I admit that the people of Nicaragua and Poland are not aware of them yet?

Imagine that Lech Walesa and Ernesto Cardenal, the worker and the poet-priest, are sitting at your dinner table. They tell you of their peoples' anguish and hopes, their victories and defeats, their faults and shortcomings, their vulnerability and isolation, their worries about where their daily bread or cornmeal is coming from. What if—with the mysterious help of the Holy Spirit—you received an illumination? Could you then help Walesa and Cardenal recognize each other as brothers—and make them see you as their protector?

Like clumsy giants, the great powers confront each other. The long shadows they cast oppress the smaller nations around them. Look at them, Holy Father! The shadows fall not only on Poland but also on Nicaragua. If you fail to admonish the United States as you have so often admonished the Soviet Union, you too will be guilty if this small and poverty-racked country is torn apart by war and its revolution crushed. As I understand Christ's teachings, that revolution should be yours.

It is threatened, this revolution: from outside, and by economic weakness within—and also by the Sandinists, whose glaring mistakes are seized upon by those who wish the revolution only failure. Fortunately, there are responsible individuals in the government who admit their mistakes. For example, after the relocation of Miskito Indians from fighting zones near the Honduran border to settlements in the interior, Daniel Ortega, coordinator of the junta, said: "We have made a multitude of mistakes. We knew nothing of their [the Indians'] religious culture, of ethnic peculiarities, almost nothing about their history or the problems of racism which the English and North American occupants left behind. Protestantism has always been the religion of the conquerors for Nicaragua. At this point the Somocistas in Honduras and Miami come in. They try to pull the Miskitos to their side and promise them independence, their own Miskito state. At the same time they attack the villages at the Honduran border and murder teachers and doctors."

From Managua we flew in a military helicopter to a newly built Miskito settlement. Roomy wood houses stand next to straw-covered temporary shelters; there is a health center and a large school barracks. Our escorts showed us how much the government has accomplished in a short time. Yet every resettlement—every forced uprooting of people—causes pain, no matter how well planned.

The soil, we are told, is better here than it is where the Indians previously lived. Eighty-five percent of the men, who formerly worked in mines, suffer from lung diseases. Now they receive medical care and pensions. Here, as elsewhere in the country, malaria has been stamped out. There is a compulsory immunization program. The American representative at the United Nations called the resettlement of the Miskitos "genocide." That is a lie, and it comes from a country that was founded on stolen land and genocide of Indians.

We spoke with a young woman named Dora María Téllez, who had participated in the attack on Somoza's palace. She describes that battle today with little emotion. Heroism is a matter of necessity when people's troubles are great enough. Now she serves as vice president of the State Council, and wants to expand its powers in the government. The country lacks strong political parties and election laws, and its Constitution is obsolete. In 1985—so Tomás Borge, Sergio Ramírez and Dora María Téllez assure us—Nicaragua's first election will be held. "Of course we will win!" they say, meaning the Sandinists. But they are too loud and too sure of themselves.

The Nicaraguans lack experience in democracy, sensitivity to constitutional rights and knowledge of the necessity for sharing power. Perhaps the Dutch, the Germans and the Scandinavians, all of them experienced in the day-to-day life of democracy, could offer the Sandinists cautious advice. A small, revolutionary country is at stake, and in need of a suitable constitution. Such help would not cost much. But to refuse to help or to offer only condescending advice could be a costly mistake.

When we arrived home, the contrast to Nicaragua was predictably obvious. Yet I was struck by a fresh view of my homeland—of its outward harshness and its inner banality. I saw a rich, well-equipped country whose society lacks cohesion—solidarity—even though it pretends to be a *Solidargemeinschaft* (solidarity community).

For months, there has been much controversy over the proposed *Ergänzungsabgabe* tax, under which salaried people would pay an additional 1 or 2 percent of their income so that the government could create new workplaces and additional apprentice positions. Nearly 2.5 million people in

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West Germany are out of work; many of them need education or training. But managers and employers with secure salaries—or rather their trade associations—have refused to make a gesture of solidarity. The main burden of the economic crisis must be borne by the workers. This officially condoned egoism mocks the concept of *Solidargemeinschaft* and signals the rise of a new class society.

Nicaragua needs help. Agriculture must be developed so that in time the country will be able to produce a surplus of beans and corn, which could help to counter the growing hunger all over the world. Will the government in Bonn understand (and why not?) that if we help Nicaragua we help ourselves. Or will it obey the wishes of the superpower-ally and get out the cudgel for Cuba—a familiar reaction which can club to death anything, not just the Sandinist revolution but also one's own thoughts?

When we arrived at home, protest marches were being suppressed in Poland with water cannons and tear gas. Just when we thought it had been buried in the nineteenth century, the old-fashioned word "solidarity" seems fresh. I have seen it in Poland and in Nicaragua. In the backyards of the superpowers, solidarity is gaining strength, and peoples of other nations should feel neighborly toward it. □

Washington

(*Continued From Page 294*)

wards on the Northwest and Southwest Sides, he received less than 2 percent.

Washington's unpopularity among white ethnics raises the specter of a backlash. For fifty years, winning the Democratic nomination has been tantamount to winning the election. Now many of the same whites who had dismissed Washington's Republican opponent, Bernard Epton (a relatively unknown former State Representative who received 11,400 votes in his primary), as a "joke" are talking about a "revival of the two-party system." In Chicago, where 96 percent of the black population lives in predominantly black areas, racial prejudice runs deep. One Southwest Side alderman who was a Byrne supporter and whose ward gave Washington a healthy 7.6 percent has already endorsed Epton as a matter of "racial pride." Epton, who has a liberal record on civil rights issues and represented a racially mixed district, had said that he would disavow such support.

In an effort to head off a wave of Democratic defections to Epton, Washington hopes to portray his opponent as the candidate of Ronald Reagan and Republican Governor James Thompson, both of whom are exceedingly unpopular with Chicago voters. Before the Republican primary, Epton moaned that the party's national committee was ignoring his candidacy. Now he may regret his party's decision to support him.

Much of the business community remains cool toward Washington, as if he has a secret wish to drive jobs and businesses from the city. And many white voters have chosen the Rev. Jesse Jackson, president of PUSH and a Washington backer, as a stand-in bogyman. The police superintendent—who said he would resign before Washington could carry out his campaign threat to fire him—charged that Jackson would run the Police Department if Washington were elected.

Should Washington win the April 12 election, he could become a national spokesman for blacks and the cities at a time when they badly need one. But his ability to bring about changes in Chicago remains questionable. The city has been ruled for fifty years by a political machine that has exploited racial and ethnic conflicts and supported racial separation. The segregation of the races that helped build the machine also led to the city's decline. Chicago's major problems—unemployment, public education and lack of decent housing—all have their roots in racial discrimination. Solving them requires a mayor who will take on the city's deep-rooted segregation, and as mayor, Washington would face a difficult and challenging period of black-white relations.

For black Americans, the struggle for political rights is fresh in memory; the battle for political power is ongoing. Nearly twenty years ago, Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Egypt still exists in Chicago, but the Pharaohs are more subtle and sophisticated." While Pharaohs Byrne and Daley quarreled, the Red Sea parted and the blacks marched out of their Egypt. But the Promised Land still lies beyond the wilderness.

ANDREW PATNER

Andrew Patner is assistant editor of Chicago *magazine.*

Red Alert

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

In this same statement, the institute makes it clear that it has a mission: "The United States of America is the primary bearer of the democratic possibility in the world today," while the Soviet Union represents the "totalitarian alternative." The churches should not remain neutral: they should "more clearly evidence their hope that the democratic ideal prevail."

From this general set of principles, the institute moves effortlessly to denunciations of the National Council's support of the American Indian Movement, its sponsorship of films on liberation theology in El Salvador and its contributions to the World Council of Churches, which has taken stands the I.R.D. disapproves of, such as condemning racism and social injustice in South Africa. In its literature, the I.R.D. depicts the National Council as not representing the predominantly conservative views of American Protestants; the implication is that Protestantism has been "taken over" by a group of wild-eyed leftists in the N.C.C.

Actually, it would be difficult to find a more pluralistic organization than the N.C.C. Its member denominations include all kinds of Americans, from corporation presidents to low-income blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans. A

Cynthia Brown is a frequent contributor to The Nation.

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single denomination, say, the United Church of Christ, can encompass both a Rev. Ben Chavis of the Wilmington Ten and a deacon who believes the poor need only a blanket and a prayer. The Episcopalians have an unusually hierarchical structure but ordain women as priests. The same denomination that contributes to the N.C.C.'s program of aid to Polish churches that assist people affected by martial law will oppose U.S. military aid to El Salvador.

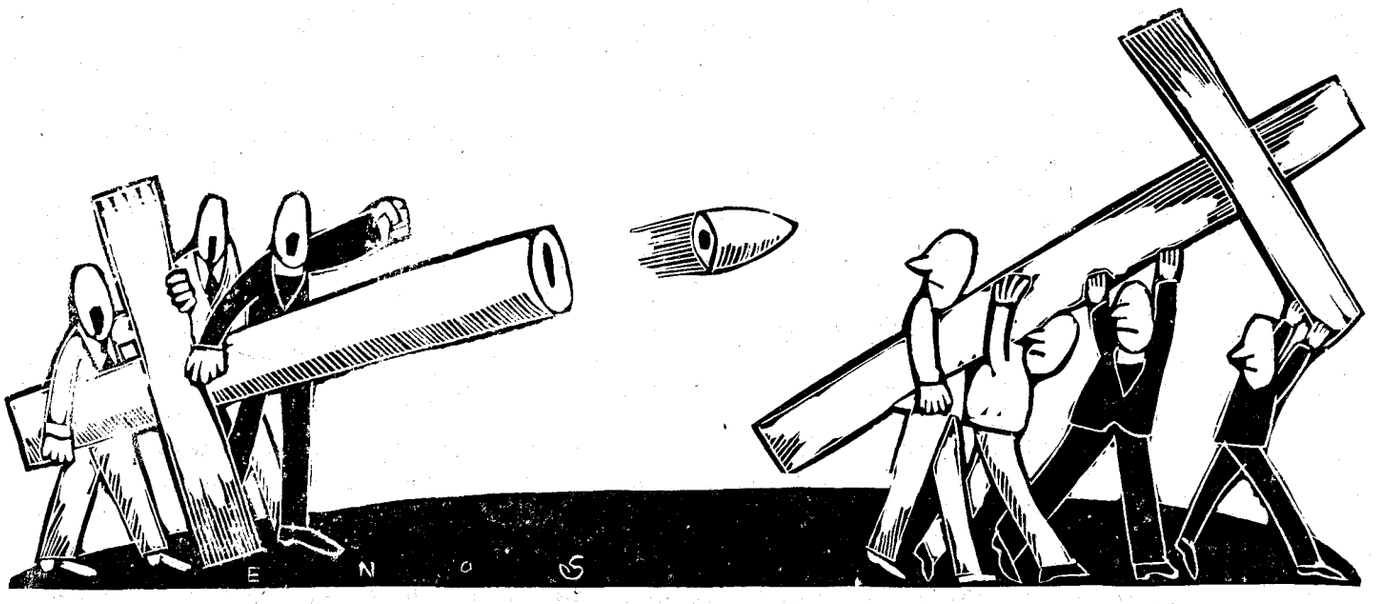
The N.C.C., funded by a portion of churchgoers' weekly offerings, reflects this diversity. The council does everything from producing Sunday school materials and encouraging Christians to get involved in their local public schools to promoting awareness of world hunger and racism and providing disaster relief. About four fifths of its budget is allocated to overseas programs, which sometimes work in conjunction with the U.S. government—the N.C.C.'s refugee resettlement program, for example, helps approximately 10 percent of all refugees aided by the government. The council coordinates its disaster-relief activities with the U.S. Agency for International Development. In 1981, more than 45 percent of its overseas budget—about $20 million—went to these two efforts. That same year, the N.C.C. channeled about $100,000 to the World Council of Churches for its international programs. Only a minuscule portion of the N.C.C.'s overseas budget—less than 4 percent—was used to promote causes like Third World development and U.S. reconciliation with Vietnam. It is on the last-named activities that the I.R.D. concentrates its fire.

In April 1980, the charges that have since become the I.R.D.'s stock in trade were aired in a paper presented at the United Methodist Church's yearly General Conference by David Jessup, who was then on the staff of the A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s Committee on Political Education. He had been a member of the church for three months, according to a church-commissioned study of the I.R.D. by independent researchers Eric Hochstein and Ronald O'Rourke, and he attended the conference as a private individual rather than as an elected representative of his Maryland congregation.

The "Jessup Report," as it became known, attacked the United Methodist Council for sending "a significant portion" of weekly offerings to "groups supporting the Palestine Liberation Organization, the governments of Cuba and Vietnam, the pro-Soviet totalitarian movements of Latin America, Asia and Africa and several violence-prone fringe groups in the United States." (He did not claim that U.M.C. money went *to* the P.L.O. et al. but to "groups supporting" such organizations—a ploy which gave him, and has since given the I.R.D., wide Red-baiting latitude.) Jessup proposed the formation of a committee on accountability to review all grants to social-action projects, even though such a committee would bypass the church's step-by-step accountability process already in place. The delegates at the conference voted down his proposal by a ten-to-one margin.

But Jessup found support for his views among a small caucus of conservative, evangelically oriented Methodists known as the "Good News Movement," who attended the meeting. From this nucleus, I.R.D. was born. One of the movement's leaders, Edmund Robb, is now chairman of the I.R.D., and his son James is its Washington director. Jessup and two other Good News members are on the institute's advisory board. The same argument Jessup used at the 1980 conference—church offerings are being siphoned off to aid radical causes—is still the I.R.D.'s central theme.

What is new, however, is the institute's financial backing. If it had to rely only on the Good News Movement's narrow base of support among the hard-shell faithful and its limited access to funding, the I.R.D. would have remained in the backwaters of the religious ultraright. But it acquired a gloss of respectability by recruiting for its board a mix of politically inclined theologians, ministers and neoconservatives who are active supporters of the Reagan Administration. Among them is Michael Novak, a Catholic, an apologist for Reaganomics and a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Novak also publishes a magazine, *Catholicism in Crisis*, a frontal assault, as its name suggests, on liberal Christianity as represented by Reinhold Niebuhr's magazine, *Christianity and Crisis*.



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Far from being "prominent religious leaders," many members of the board, like Novak, have little or no connection with organized Protestantism. Their conservative credentials, however, are impeccable. According to the Hochstein-O'Rourke study, twelve of the thirty members of the institute's board are also members of the Committee for The Free World, a galaxy of anti-Communist intellectuals, artists, scholars, polemicists and religious leaders which launched its defense of Western values in 1981 with a full-page ad in *The New York Times* bearing the headline: "We—a group of intellectuals and religious leaders—applaud American policy in El Salvador." Several board members also belong to Social Democrats, U.S.A., a small anti-Soviet political party which has ties to the A.F.L.-C.I.O.

Two key I.R.D. figures are Richard Neuhaus and Penn Kemble. Neuhaus, a Lutheran pastor who worked for an American Enterprise Institute project in the late 1970s and who has long been critical of "secularized" church social-action programs, is the institute's "religious spokesman," appearing always in his clerical collar. Kemble, whose background is purely secular, helped the I.R.D. get started by sheltering it under his Coalition for a Democratic Majority, an umbrella organization for neoconservative groups. Like Jessup, Kemble was active in left-wing politics in the 1960s, and his talents are primarily organizational.

Having board members so well connected to the American Enterprise Institute and other neoconservative bastions enabled the I.R.D. to tap the usual right-wing foundations. In its first year, the I.R.D. received a grant of $65,000, one third of its budget, from the Smith Richardson Foundation, a longtime funder of conservative projects that has ties to the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency. (Contributions that year from supporters of the Good News Movement totaled only $10,000.) Since then, the group has continued to rely primarily on foundation backing, receiving contributions from Smith Richardson, the Scaife Family Charitable Trust, the Earhart Foundation and the John M. Olin Foundation—all organizations with a pro-Reagan, pro-corporate agenda and almost nonexistent records of support for religious groups.

There is nothing illegal about this, of course, nor is there anything wrong with a bunch of folks getting together to promote their point of view. But the I.R.D.'s leadership and sources of funding give the lie to its claims of being centrist and of having a significant base of support within the churches. As Peter Steinfels described the institute in his book *The Neoconservatives*: "A highly political and partisan organization marches under the banner of church independence. A group claiming the accountability of church leaders is responsible to a self-selecting committee of six persons, two of whom have no previous record of church activities." Steinfels held that there was "a certain comic quality" to the I.R.D., given this transparent hypocrisy. But there is nothing funny about the group's success in presenting itself in the media as an independent centrist voice representing the betrayed ordinary churchgoer.

The I.R.D.'s first media coup came in 1981, on the PBS series *Ben Wattenberg At Large*. Featured on the program was an interview with Edmund Robb, who was identified only as a disgruntled church member, purportedly chosen from among many. Robb's activities at the 1980 United Methodist Church General Conference and his involvement with the institute were not mentioned. The entire program was given over to an attack on the National Council's stands on abortion, homosexuality and the Salvadoran insurrection. In the interview Robb said, "We feel like that [*sic*] homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." Wattenberg stated that the National Council's advocacy of school busing and cuts in the defense budget "would raise eyebrows" in a Texas church—suggesting that the N.C.C. was out of step with members of its constituent churches. As would subsequent stories, Wattenberg's program emphasized the National Council's support for programs of the World Council of Churches.

The next broadsides appeared in *Reader's Digest*. In August 1982 the magazine published an article attacking the World Council ("Karl Marx or Jesus Christ?"), and in January of this year it printed one attacking the National Council ("Do You Know Where Your Church Offerings Go?"). The World Council was accused, among other things, of contributing $672,500, over an unspecified period, to some forty American groups including the Center for National Security Studies. The article on the National Council condemned its statements praising religious freedom in Cuba and its efforts to effect a reconciliation between the United States and Vietnam. David Jessup was quoted: "People just can't believe that their church . . . can be financing all these Marxist-Leninist projects." And a "How You Can Help" section plugged the I.R.D. (Jessup's connection with the institute was not mentioned.) Fundamental to the case against the N.C.C. was a description of its officials as "leftists."

To the charge that the council funnels churchgoers' tithes to leftist causes, the Rev. Paul McCleary, who heads the Church World Service—the overseas aid and development program which spends about 80 percent of the N.C.C. budget—says, "I laugh. Because I'm sitting on a $40 million budget and I can't move a dime." McCleary means that virtually all of the C.W.S.'s money is earmarked for specific continuing programs or for one-time projects. Donors know where their money is going, and the National Council's member denominations decide what projects the C.W.S. will help and how much it will give to each. As for the charge that church offerings support the World Council, there is less to it than meets the eye. For instance, only .05 percent of all the donations to the United Church of Christ went to the W.C.C. in 1981.

These facts were ignored by CBS, however, in the double segment of *60 Minutes* on January 23 devoted to the National and World Councils—or rather, to what neoconservatives say about them. In its opening teaser the announcer asked if church offerings should be used to help Fidel Castro or if they should be used to support causes favored by

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churchgoers, and it was full speed ahead from there. After claiming that "it is near impossible to follow church money in any precise way," the segment avoided serious discussion of the accountability process and concentrated on what politically undefined "critics" have said. The on-camera critics were a conservative pastor, several of his parishioners, a Salvation Army spokesman and—commenting during the program like a Greek chorus—Robb and Neuhaus of the I.R.D. The only reference to the institute was a passing mention that it is a group funded by "some conservative foundations." No questions were raised as to its religious nature or its representativeness.

Morley Safer repeatedly implied—without offering any evidence—that W.C.C. money has been used to purchase rifles for guerrillas in southern Africa. He criticized the W.C.C. for contributing funds to Nicaragua's literacy campaign, neglecting to mention, amid all the rhetoric about political indoctrination, that the U.S. Agency for International Development supported the campaign as well. Safer claimed that the "blatantly pro-Castro" Cuba Resource Center, a New York City organization, "received heavy financial support" from "National Council member churches." The distinction—that the money came from the churches, not from the National Council—was probably lost on most viewers. Although the N.C.C. has never contributed to the Cuba Resource Center, the council's president, Bishop James Armstrong, was hectored by Safer on this point. Armstrong's insistence that he did not know the center was a leftist organization was let stand, leaving the impression that he was either a dupe or a liar.

Safer also reported that the Washington, D.C., Office on Latin America, a church-funded human rights organization, and the Committee in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador, which an "ad hoc committee . . . working out of National Council headquarters" helped get started, had "released some controversial documents that [they] claimed were confidential State Department memoranda on American involvement in El Salvador." In reality, Safer said, the documents were K.G.B. forgeries. He was referring to the so-called "dissent paper," supposedly written by State Department officials critical of U.S. policy in Central America. Although an F.B.I. spokesman testified before the House Select Committee on Intelligence that there were "similarities" between it and other Soviet forgeries, the F.B.I. refuses to confirm or deny that the paper is a forgery.

The program also charged that the United Methodists had fronted for the U.S. Communist Party at a conference on southern Africa. It even offered a Pakistani church official's condemnation of the treatment of Australian aborigines as an "example" of the W.C.C.'s failure to criticize human rights violations "in the Soviet-dominated world"! From beginning to end, CBS put its name to an onslaught of innuendo and unsubstantiated charges, using I.R.D. arguments and I.R.D. spokesmen.

Such distortions are damaging to the credibility of church leaders in the United States. Just as important, they could cause misunderstandings that might endanger the lives of Protestants exercising their social consciences abroad. The *60 Minutes* show was broadcast in South Korea, where churches that advocate human rights have long been vulnerable to government repression. And it was picked up by South Africa's state television system. On February 14, eight days after the show was broadcast, the head of South Africa's security police recommended that the nation's Council of Churches, led by an outspoken black critic of apartheid, should be denied funds from foreign sources—which provide more than 90 percent of its budget—and that its fund raising inside the country should be strictly controlled.

The I.R.D., then, has arrived. It is certainly not the first conservative challenge to the N.C.C.; there are some sterling precedents from the 1950s, including a 1955 Air Force training manual that accused Bible scholars at work on a Revised Standard Version of having Communist affiliations. (The Air Force later withdrew the manual and apologized, claiming the false information had come from Midwestern fundamentalist groups.) But because the I.R.D. pretends to political neutrality and wears its conservatism under clerical robes, it has influence with the media. And its success comes at a time when the causes the National Council supports—aid to the poor, development and social justice in the Third World, racial integration and minority rights—are under systematic attack by the Reagan Administration. As Bishop Armstrong, N.C.C. president, told Morley Safer: "You're asking me to speak in the language of the U.S. government. I won't." The I.R.D. is happy to, and it is no longer comic. □

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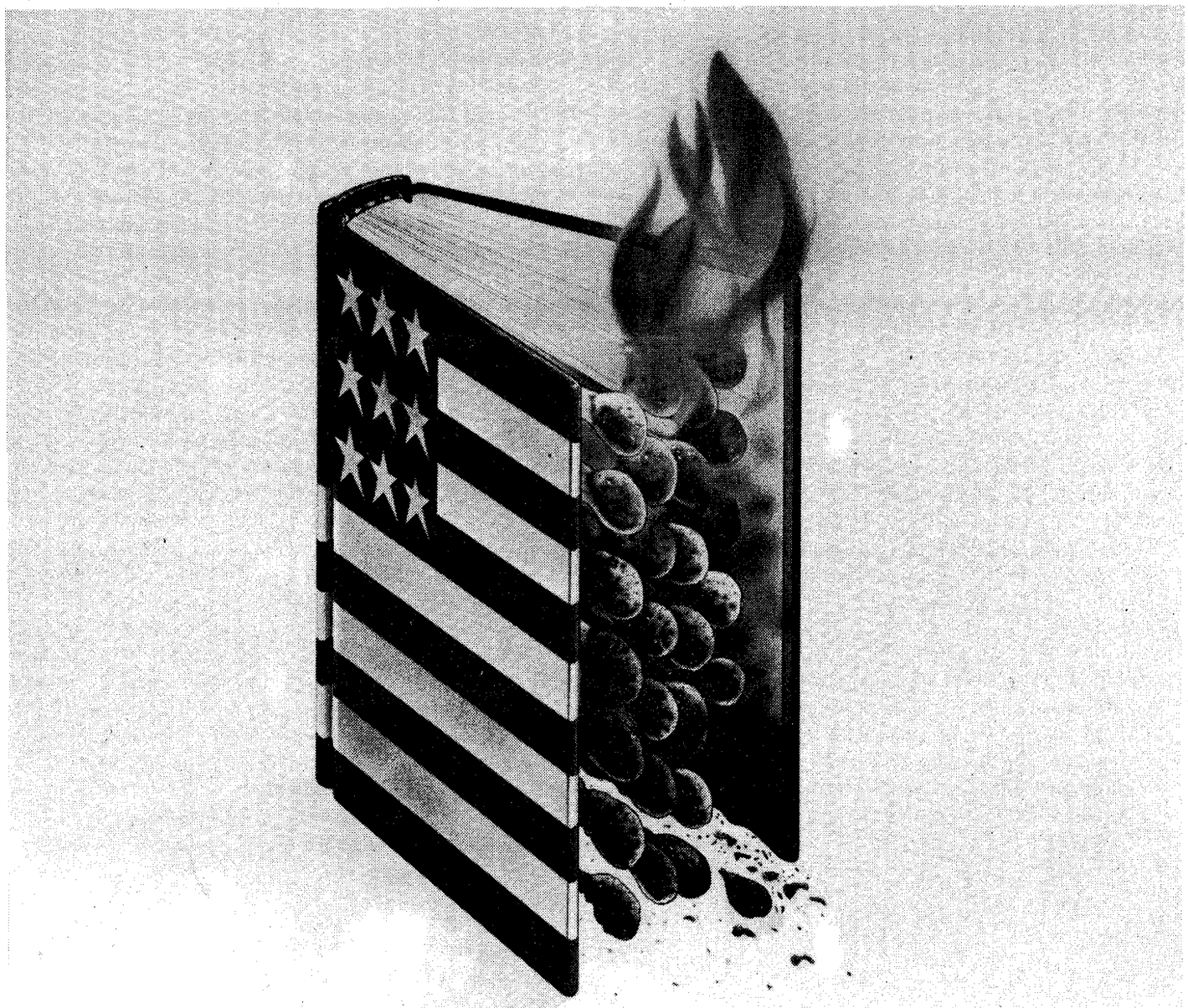

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Cain Scrutiny

GARY GIDDINS

CAIN: The Biography of James M. Cain. *By Roy Hoopes. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 688 pp. $25.*

Thumbing through some old issues of *Esquire* recently, I came across (in the September 1961 issue) James M. Cain's last published short story, "The Visitor." In recycling material from one of his earliest stories, "The Baby in the Icebox," and an even earlier, widely noted newspaper editorial, it gives symmetry to Cain's long and extremely uneven career. So far as I know, the story has never been reprinted, and Roy Hoopes hardly mentions it in his extensively researched biography. Yet this tale of a man's obsessional confrontation with an escaped circus tiger mirrors Cain's obsession with numerous novels and plays he hadn't the talent to bring off; its ironic conclusion, in which the man winds up a media buffoon rubbing noses with the tiger on TV, suggests Cain's ambivalence about the immense notoriety he achieved with a string of best sellers in the 1930s.

Cain is an indelible part of America's literary history. As Hoopes demonstrates, the popular success of his first novel, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, published in 1934 when Cain was 42 and an established newspaperman, was virtually unprecedented in the annals of best-sellerdom. It made Cain's reputation as a tough, terse chronicler of the seamy underside of the Depression, a reputation that grew during the next twelve years with the publication of the magazine serial "Double Indemnity" and the novels *Serenade*, *Mildred Pierce* and *Past All Dishonor*. Great claims were made for the economy of his prose, the accuracy of his dialogue, the Aristotelian cohesiveness of his plots. Hemingway's enemies used Cain to poke at the old master (who was actually Cain's junior by seven years), and Edmund Wilson begrudgingly conferred upon him the mark of a potential Olympian. Then it all vanished—the talent and the adulation. He continued to write as doggedly as ever, completing his eighteenth novel at 84, but much of his later work is so stupendously inane that it tends to cast retroactive doubts upon the integrity of his Depression novels. Indeed, if his publishers thought the likes of *Galatea* (1953) and *Rainbow's End* (1975) signaled some kind of return to his old form, one can only wonder how dreary the five novels they rejected (and which remain unpublished) must be.

Still, Cain's best work will not go away. It is continuously reprinted and repeatedly optioned to the movies and television (*Postman* has been filmed four times). Surely, this can't be attributed solely to his fixation on murder, adultery, bisexuality and incest. The real measure of Cain's kinkiness is not to be found in his standard kill-the-husband plot, or in the orgasmic glee that accompanies the killing, but in the born-again conviction with which his moral outlaws stride into hell. Lacking real motivation, they succumb to evil almost as a relief from boredom. Cain looked to fairy tales and myth for inspiration—Cinderella, Pandora's Box—and his pet theme was the horror unleashed by a vain wish fulfilled.

Cain occasionally crops up in writing seminars as a model for hard-boiled storytelling in which the plot, unencumbered by superimposed symbols, does most of the work. The first sentence of *Postman*—"They threw me off the hay truck about noon"—is probably the best known example of an *in medias res* lead in contemporary American writing. The momentum that makes his books "unlaydownable," in Franklin Pierce Adams's phrase, remains unrivaled. Although the monomaniacal obsessions of his misbegotten tramps occasionally seem laughable, as Wilson noted (Cora's constant complaints about Nick's greasy skin in *Postman*, for example), Cain's elliptical character studies, surprising attention to unlikely details and zealous fatalism give his tabloid fictions a depth, an emotional weight, that certifies them as literature.

Hoopes's biography is not entirely successful. It's overlong, unimaginative, tenuous in its too infrequent attempts at critical evaluation and not without errors. Yet even amid the current bonanza of literary biographies it's compelling, not because Cain's life was the stuff of fiery gossip—as were the lives of Porter, Camus, Lowell—but because, by contemporary literary standards, he was dismayingly, appallingly normal. He occasionally drank too much, but he was not an alcoholic; he married four times, but he was no satyr; he could be mean but not vengeful, self-serving but not pretentious; he was not homosexual; he enjoyed triumphant success and endured grim failure, but he never stopped writing—five hours a day until his death in 1977 at 85. The suspense Hoopes generates has an unusual animus: how, you wonder, will he fill 688 pages with a character who does nothing but write and who refuses, in the face of every temptation, to succumb to either block or nervous breakdown? Perhaps only a biography of Joyce Carol Oates would offer greater promise of dullness.

But Cain's life isn't dull at all. He wrote in interesting circumstances among interesting people, and he had a genius for making things more difficult than necessary. He was born in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1892; his father was a college president and his mother a former opera singer. Although he affected a tough-guy image all his life—perhaps because his rumpled, homely face looked like something out of film noir but more likely because it was a way of preserving ties with his beloved newspaper world while surrounded by effete Hollywood—Cain prided himself on the perfect diction and manners that won him a job with Walter Lippmann on the New York *World*. He made writing his career only after he realized that he hadn't the talent to pursue his only other consuming passion, opera. Success as a journalist came quickly. While serving in World War I, he edited *The Lorraine Cross* (his regiment's newspaper) and was involved in a calamitous expedition that became the basis for his much admired war story, "The Taking of Montfaucon," published in 1929 in Mencken's *American Mercury*. Throughout the early 1920s, he attracted attention with the editorials he wrote first for Mencken and then for Lippmann, as well as with articles in *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Nation*. His 1923 article for this publication, "West Virginia: A Mine-Field Melodrama," demon-

Gary Giddins is the author of Riding on a Blue Note *(Oxford).*

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V. S. PRITCHETT Speaking for The Folio Society

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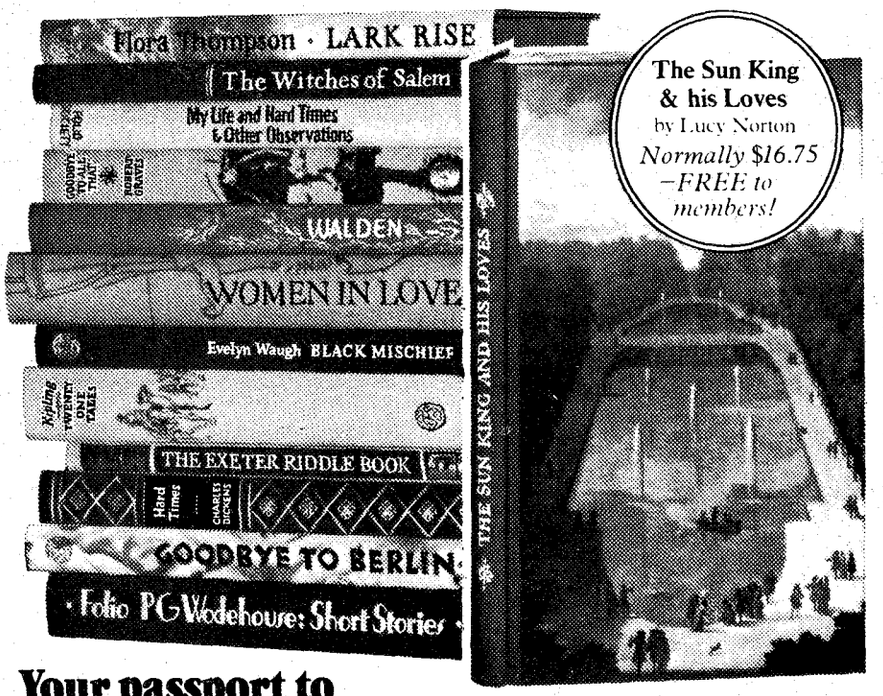
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strates a command of descriptive writing that he rarely displayed in his novels. He wrote an unsuccessful play (the first of several; apparently, Cain's knack for dialogue worked only in fiction), briefly served as managing editor of *The New Yorker*, collected a volume of his *Mercury* pieces and embarked on what would become a seventeen-year stint as an unsuccessful Hollywood scriptwriter before Alfred Knopf reluctantly published his first novel.

Cain's reaction to his success was curious. Despite pleas from editors for more of the same, he constantly wrote his agent with suggestions for books and articles about kids, food and other unlikely subjects, which he thought were his true métier. One hot idea was "a sort of neighborhood series, with an eight-year-old boy, his squirrel, his eight-year-old lady friend, his mother who wins diving contests, his father who teaches Greek"; another was a story about the War of 1812 called "Beauty, Booty, and Blood." Somehow, he managed to write the books for which posterity cherishes him, though he didn't always perceive their true merit. Cain's most Byzantine and, I think, best novel, *Serenade*, is a pioneering and sympathetic study of obsession—specifically, an opera singer's battle with homosexual impulses which are so destructive to his sense of identity that they destroy his life and his art. Here, as elsewhere, Cain wrote better than he knew; he thought he was making a brief against the debilitating effects of a dreadful perversion. Similarly, he thought *Mildred Pierce*, his suburban study of an ambitious mom and her viciously thankless daughter, was really about what happens when a Philistine parent produces an artistic child.

In 1948, having embarked on his successful fourth marriage (to opera singer Florence Macbeth), Cain decided to abandon Hollywood for a full-time career as a novelist. He also made the disastrous decision to move back to Maryland. Hoopes gives few clues to his reason, though it's likely that Cain was dissatisfied with California after his attempt to organize a writer's union ended with him being labeled a Commie and screenwriting jobs petered out. Perhaps his wife encouraged the move. In any case, at 56 he was finally ready to commit himself to doing nothing but writing books. He never wrote another good one. Convinced after the huge success of *Past All Dishonor* that his vocation lay in historical fiction, he set out on grueling research trips. No sooner had one novel been rejected than he was working on another. Believing commercial acclaim was the only excuse for writing, he was forever trying to anticipate the public's fancy, but by the late 1940s he had completely lost contact.

Much of Hoopes's research is based on Cain's unpublished memoirs and on numerous letters that are admiringly referred to so often that I expect we'll get a volume of them soon enough. But Cain ultimately evades his biographer, who fails to answer the question posed in his preface: "What was wrong with being James M. Cain?" A long literary biography that declines to take responsibility for putting the writer's work in perspective is bound to compromise its very reason for being. Since Hoopes refuses to discuss what the novels might mean, he is unable to relate them to the life, though it seems obvious that they unravel more secrets than Cain's self-conscious memoir. When Hoopes wants to comment on a novel, *The Magician's Wife* for example, he does so intelligently, yet a few pages later, he's content to treat *Rainbow's End* (a novel that's bad in revealing ways) with bland quotations from contemporary reviews. This arbitrariness is maddening at times, as when he refers to an editorial as Cain's "greatest moment," or speaks of the ruthlessness of "the best article he ever wrote," but fails to justify his opinion.

Cain's business and domestic life is confusing. We are reminded continuously that Cain's books were selling in the millions, yet he was always strapped for cash. On the basis of Hoopes's evidence, Milton Friedman would have a rough time figuring out Cain's finances. Hoopes also slights the fact that Cain did his best work when he was married to Elina Tyszecka (his second wife), and her children from a former marriage disappear from the narrative after the divorce. Did Cain have no contact with them until his final years? The Hollywood account is occasionally inaccurate. Hoopes refers to Cain's having worked on a script by Daniel Mainwaring based on Tourneur's *Out of the Past*, and to his subsequent collaboration on a script based on Geoffrey Holmes's *Build My Gallows High* that became *Johnny O'Clock*. Actually, Tourneur directed *Out of the Past*, which was based on *Build My Gallows High*; Geoffrey Holmes was simply Mainwaring's pseudonym. Milton Holmes wrote *Johnny O'Clock*. Nor does Hoopes seem to be aware that Cain briefly worked on a Chekhov adaptation for Douglas Sirk, or that when Sirk directed the second version of *Interlude*, it was assumed at Universal that the original source was *Serenade*. This is significant because when the *Interlude* story was originally filmed (under the title of another Cain property, *When Tomorrow Comes*), Cain unsuccessfully sued on the grounds that a key scene had been plagiarized from *Serenade*.

Hoopes has nonetheless written a highly readable account of an ordinary man with an unusual talent that he could only intermittently control. Cain may have excelled at writing about the average Joe because that's what he was, and he may have refused even the mildest perquisites of fame in his later years because he recognized that writing was his job and passion but not his genius. This self-appraisal, if true, would not be altogether fair, of course—he did have fourteen extraordinary years in the fiction biz (1934-48). And if the Muse who punctured his balloon at the very pinnacle of his success remains shrouded in mystery, the image of the largely forgotten Cain, ailing yet intrepid, pounding out one unpublishable work after another, is ineffably sad but also curiously inspiring. □

DISCOVERY

When I wake
in the early hours
I think there must be
something I have learned from
these violent dreams
and then I know
how it will be in
my last hours.

Harvey Shapiro

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Bustles and Bathing Suits

ANNA SHAPIRO

AMERICAN BEAUTY. *By Lois W. Banner. Alfred A. Knopf. 369 pp. $20.*

The Chinese bound their feet, the Ubangi stretch their lips; some societies go in for scarification while others merely slit holes in free-standing flesh, cinch bodies breathlessly in or pad them out. The enlightened Western woman is likely to be distracted from the pitch of her high heels and the ache of her contact lenses mainly by the fact that she has had two sticks of celery for lunch and is starving. Beauty, somebody has remarked, is pain.

But it is also, as this history patently denies, pleasure. *American Beauty* details the familiar horrors of the bustle and corset, concentrating on the emphasis finery and female beauty have been given in American life, and on the disapproval this has occasioned in visitors and natives. Much of this material will be familiar to students of nineteenth-century culture—though any nostalgia for a time when plump women were admired and dieting was unheard of will be shattered. Banner's most interesting points concern the rise of what she dubs the "fashion culture," but she makes too little of them: her history of New York department stores could have stood the full-dress treatment of their Parisian counterparts in M.B. Miller's *Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920.* Casual remarks about entrepreneurs (mostly women) who became millionaires on beauty products are all but thrown away. Nevertheless, she blames commercialism for the triumph of fashion, making one evil the work of the other. That this triumph is not ultimate and absolute she credits to feminism.

Every age of fashion has had its excesses, as well as folk to deplore them. One thinks of the wigs that sat like second heads on eighteenth-century scalps, of the panniers that made ironing boards out of hips. The tight-lacing of stays—the precursor of the corset—was the scandal of mid-nineteenth-century America, and has often been cited as the real physical cause of those famous Victorian vapors and fainting spells. The earliest crusaders for women's rights were among the detractors of tight-lacing, but they were pretty late to the game: "Extreme tight-lacing and public dismay about it," writes art historian Anne Hollander, "seem to have intensified after 1760, and continued to increase throughout the nineteenth century." It's hard to see what effect the feminist critique, which embraced more than tight-lacing, had: the century also saw the return of the laughably unwieldy skirt and hairdo—the former thanks to crinolines and hoops, the latter, as if in compensation for the diminishing circumference of the hem toward the end of the century, so bouffant it *looked* puffed out by crinoline.

Extravagant styles in clothing, hair or body were deplored by the sensible, but even more deplored was women's preoccupation with them, which often amounted to a full-time job. "Most women," according to a dress-reformist in 1873, "redid their wardrobes four times a year. Since each change required about three months of work," that made just twelve months. Working girls spent their wages (often earned in the manufacture of cloth or clothing) on "fancy clothes." Prostitution, the author suggests, was a not uncommon last resort to support this expensive habit. On the other hand, maybe those women were just sick of slaving away for $1.25 a week while men made $1.25 a day—and what could show their improved earning power better than dress?

It is symptomatic of Banner's prejudice—that the pursuit of physical beauty unfits women for worthier tasks—that she seriously underestimates the role dress and appearance play in signaling qualities she would otherwise applaud. The woman sitting over her sewing machine twelve months round may be enslaved to fashion, but she certainly isn't in servitude to her family or anyone else. She seems to have made a *choice.* For her, as Ann Douglas pointed out in *The Feminization of American Culture*, "fashion was [a] form of reprisal."

To many European visitors it seemed shocking that America, standard-bearer of a simpler, anti-aristocratic way of life, should have so quickly opted for the kind of display Europe associated with aristocracy. Our department stores were palaces, and women paraded the streets clothed like princesses. But it was precisely the fact that *working girls* were dressed like princesses that was so unsettling. It was bad enough for Marie Antoinette to dress as a milkmaid, but what should one call a society in which a milkmaid looked like a queen? A democracy, I would say—however impractical the individual mode of showing it. Banner, however, ignores the democratizing uses of fashion in America.

In her zeal to debunk feminine fashion, she also ignores the usefulness of many traditional garments. The skirt, that synecdoche of the female, comes in for opprobrium here, yet in hot weather men are the ones who sweat in suits and ties while women breeze along in dresses. The skirt originally was more practical for women than pants ever could be. "So strong was the identification of trousers with masculinity that not until the early nineteenth century had women worn divided undergarments," Banner writes, as though this were a deprivation. In fact, divided undergarments meant that for the first time, women had to partially undress in order to do what men did with a flick of the fly, and what women used to do with a flick of their skirts. Hardly a practical development.

American Beauty is as strange to read as a history of alcoholic beverages written by a temperance campaigner. Banner shares, unrevised and unexamined, most of the views of the abolitionists, suffragists and prohibitionists who made up nineteenth-century feminism (as well as their language: "attire" and "garb," the word "agitations" for war). Many of these notions are not so much feminist, in the modern sense, as puritanical—if not finally sexist in the blind assumption that, so far as clothing goes, male is better. Does Banner think American women have been will-less ninnies for the past 200 years? She can only have written this meandering and not entirely trustworthy (she calls James McNeill Whistler British and Botticelli a Mannerist) academic taxonomy of style by studiously overlooking the pleasure principle so intricately, if often perversely, bound up in fashion's eloquent symbol system. Limited though it may be, fashion has been a mode of expression for American women, as well as a means of oppression.

What is really destructive in notions

Anna Shapiro is a freelance writer in New York City. Her reviews have appeared in The Saturday Review *and* The Soho News.

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of beauty is not particular standards or ideals so much as the conviction that a woman's worth is determined by her appearance. And even in nineteenth-century America, there was always a prejudice, in men and women, against *mere* beauty. The "steel-engraving lady," the etiolated fashion plate of 1810, was not only laced to the point of faintness to look stylishly ill, she often *was* ill. In an age that romanticized the afterlife, nearness to death signified spirituality, and it was the spirituality that was fashionable—the white skin, the tiny waist, hands and feet were merely thought to be indicators. Banner remembers this in a discussion of fiction but sometimes forgets it when discussing the fashionable figure and what covered it.

After the Great War the body was allowed more and more freedom, both in style of clothing and in movement (and that men have also been confined and hampered by dress—even the corset has at times afflicted them—is a fact not attended to in the single chapter on male fashions). Spirituality was replaced by more literal styles of sex appeal, culminating, on Banner's timetable, at the popular seaside resort of Atlantic City in 1921 with the first Miss America pageant. Unqualifiedly identifying feminism with athleticism, Banner allows that the bathing suit freed women to really swim, but claims that it "also created an emphasis on the body that was not liberating, but rather confining, and that locked women into stereotypes in many ways more destructive than the old ones."

You can't blame the *bathing suit*. In fact, as women's sports have gained respect in the past few years, it has become clear that it is very easy for both athletes and spectators to keep sports, not sex, in mind, if that is the occupation of the woman in her skintight Danskins. The exception is the ambiguous case of Jane Fonda-style exercise, which is a form of tight-lacing from within, as susceptible to commercialization as corsets and cosmetics. In extolling exercise as an antidote to fashion, Banner shows her ideas of beauty to be as culture-bound as an Eskimo's. Not that they aren't sensible. But then, so are an Eskimo's. All that blubber insulates.

The denigration of fashion by feminist and misogynist alike is really yet one more way of trivializing women's concerns. A beautiful and original dress may not be on a par with a symphony or a poem, but it's not without artistry and meaning. Is clothing more frivolous than architecture, the high heel more inconvenient than, say, the staircase that adds an exhausting climb along with grandeur to an entryway that could just as easily have been placed at street level? Fashion is not the only aspect of life in which the pursuit of beauty has less to do with sense than with the senses; no culture, it seems, is content to leave to nature what can be claimed by art. In China, where commercialism can hardly be blamed, women, after years of wearing equalizing blue cotton, risked official censure for a chance at perfume, curled hair, a square of red silk. The paradoxes of fashion should never be overlooked, by feminists least of all. □

Not for Teens Only

NORMA KLEIN

HERBERT ROWBARGE. *By Natalie Babbitt. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 216 pp. $11.95.*

SUMMER GIRLS, LOVE BOYS. *By Norma Fox Mazer. Delacorte Press. 243 pp. $11.95.*

THE SUMMERBOY. *By Robert Lipsyte. Harper & Row. 160 pp. $9.95.*

Most books published nowadays for "young adults," the current euphemism for adolescents, would not be of interest to readers of first-rate adult fiction. Not because of the subject matter—all of us remember our teenage years as times that were crucial in determining the adults we became—but because of their simplistic themes, unimaginative language and saccharine plots, in which every problem is wrapped up with a happy ending or moral lesson: How I learned to cope with my mother's death, my drug addiction, my abortion. Each year, though, there are a few outstanding books that are too sophisticated in concept, approach and use of language for the average teenager but, tarred with the "young adult" label, fail to reach their proper audience—grown-ups.

The most dramatic example of this in recent decades is Natalie Babbitt's *Herbert Rowbarge*. It is in no way, shape or form a book for adolescents. It is an adult novel: all the main characters are over 40. The irony and detachment of its point of view and the lyrical precision of its language remind one of Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*. Like that novel, *Herbert Rowbarge* is not a "big book"; it is barely over 200 pages. But it is a totally satisfying literary experience, and I fervently hope adult readers will discover it.

The structure of *Herbert Rowbarge* is unusual and captivating. In the even-numbered chapters we follow Herbert's life, from birth to death. Born one of a pair of identical twins, he is separated from his brother at birth and raised in an orphanage. Throughout his life, Herbert is an incomplete person searching, without ever knowing it, for his other self. Mirrors confuse, delight and terrify him. In one of the most moving moments of the book, he goes into an amusement park fun house to find one of his twin daughters making out with a boy. In panic he gapes "with a joy more horrible than horror at the gaping Herberts all around him." Even in this age of antiheroes, Herbert is hard to like in any easy way. He loves no one—neither his best friend, Dick Festeen, who remains loyal to him for a lifetime, nor his twin daughters, Babe and Louisa, the sight of whom fills him with resentment, nor his homely and pathetic wife, Ruby, whom he marries for her money. And yet because we know Herbert's secret twinship we can feel for him. His torment, his search for his "missing part," becomes a metaphor for everyone's search for the person who will magically complement them. Yet Babbitt never makes it a heavy, literary symbol; Herbert is real.

In comic and wonderful contrast to Herbert's chapters are the odd-numbered ones, which follow Babe and Louisa, called "Bleeza" at school because no one could ever tell them apart. Well into middle age, they still dress alike, referring to "our little green print . . . as if they were always zipped

Norma Klein's new collection of short stories is Sextet in A Minor *(St. Martin's-Marek).*

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together into a single costume." Reflecting on why they have never married, they agree: "Who could ever love and understand us as much as we do?" Forced in later years to live apart, one with their father, one with their aunt, they meet secretly for picnics on the lake or to exchange gossip in the local stores. Their conversations are a perfect, relaxed counterpoint, two people so much alike that they finish each other's thoughts and sentences with effortless ease. Even in their father's will they are treated as one person: his estate is divided between his nephew and the two of them. And yet they are not dismayed. When Babe comments that they are, after all, "old and plain and dull," Louisa, upon reflection, adds, "But rich . . . Don't forget that. Old, plain, dull and rich." I can't think of another novelist who could sustain the marvelous sweetness of the relationship between these hopeless, peculiar women.

The author of several young-adult novels and a short story collection, *Dear Bill, Remember Me?*, Norma Fox Mazer writes in a naturalistic, warm, conversational style that reminds one of Saroyan or early Carson McCullers. Her new collection, *Summer Girls, Love Boys*, like her previous one, was written specifically as a book, a fact which gives the stories an unusual unity and connectedness. Unlike *Herbert Rowbarge*, *Summer Girls* is accessible to teen-agers as well as adults. Most of the main characters are young people, but Mazer writes about them with an affectionate irony that older readers will appreciate. "Down Here On Greene Street," in fact, is about a 70-year-old woman, Lillian, who toys with the idea of leaving the street where she has lived all her life, to run off with her widowed boyfriend, Fred. In the end, the pull of the neighborhood proves greater than the pull of a new romance, and the two end up talking long-distance, smoking and coughing, missing each other but unable to make the final commitment.

One of Mazer's strong points, and one that makes her rare among contemporary writers, is the ease and skill with which she writes about poor people. Her characters hardly ever graduate from high school, and often work in bakeries or factories. Unlike, say, Raymond Carver, who observes lower-class people with sardonic detachment, Mazer gets into their world, rendering their speech and manners accurately and affectionately. In "Carmella, Adelina, and Florry," set in 1949, a young woman takes a job as a punch-press operator in a mica insulating factory to please her handsome Marxist boyfriend. Remembering the experience years later—the bawdy talk among the women she befriends, the foiled attempt at reforming horrendous factory conditions—she realizes that it was this bond between the women that made a lasting difference in her life; the boyfriend has long been forgotten.

Mazer's characters are often eccentric, even bizarre, like crazy Aunt Clare, with whom one teen-age heroine spends a short vacation in "Amelia Earhart, Where Are You When I Need You?" Home from her job as a cleaning lady, Clare spends days on end playing Monopoly with her niece until the two of them are ready to drop. Once she is back home, the niece realizes that their relationship has no future, that her aunt is permanently and irrevocably removed from reality—and it is this unsparing tone that protects Mazer's stories from sentimentality. One waits throughout "Carmella, Adelina, and Florry," for instance, for a *Norma Rae*-like climax in which the victorious fac-

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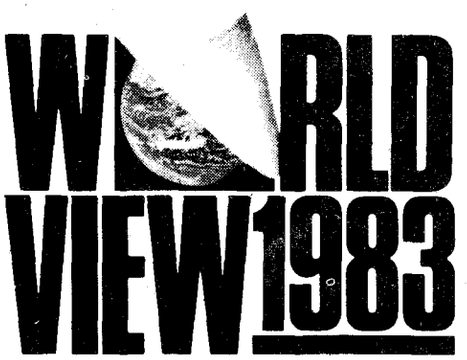

WHAT THE PRESS AND TELEVISION HAVE NOT TOLD YOU ABOUT THE YEAR'S MEGA-ISSUES

by FRANÇOIS GÈZE, YVES LACOSTE, and ALFREDO VALLADÃO

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tory workers triumph over their oppressors. But no, the women lose their jobs and move on. Life, either because of social forces or the habits of character, is less subject to alteration than one would like.

The Summerboy, by Robert Lipsyte, is the third in a trilogy which began several years ago with *One Fat Summer*, the hilarious, poignant story of 200-pound Bobby Marks, who fought his way through a summer of humiliations and ended up thin and eager to enjoy the erotic fun from which he had previously felt excluded. Now Bobby is in college and determined to last out a grueling summer job in a local laundry run by a factory owner who is violating every work law he can.

Until recently, the vast majority of children's book writers were non-Jewish and their books had rural, homespun, wholesome themes. Only in the last decade have writers like Lipsyte, Judy Blume and Deborah Hautzig created anything akin to the Jewish novels that have been a mainstay of adult fiction for so long. Bobby Marks is a character out of early Roth—wry, introspective. Even slimmed-down, he is more of an observer than a doer, and he delights the reader with the engaging urban freshness of his point of view. We sense from the beginning that not much will come of his crush on blond, feisty Diana, a factory girl who regards him as a stool pigeon for the boss. More moving is Bobby's nonromantic friendship with Joanie, who is involved in an ultimately disastrous affair with a married man. (Bobby helps her when she needs an abortion, more an act of courage and personal loyalty back in the 1950s, when the book takes place, than it might be today.) If there is a problem with *The Summerboy*, it is that the factory owner, Roger Sinclair, is perhaps too much of a villain and gets too decisive and satisfying a comeuppance. But one readily forgives that because of the well-paced plot and the truthful ironies of Bobby's perceptions of the world. One of the few male writers in the young-adult field, Lipsyte writes books that teen-agers who loved "Catcher in the Rye" and don't know where to turn next will appreciate. □

Poems Magical, Poems Mordant

BRUCE BENNETT

HOUSEHOLD TALES OF MOON AND WATER. *By Nancy Willard. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 96 pp. $9.95.*

AUSTERITIES. *By Charles Simic. George Braziller. 64 pp. $7.95. Paper $4.95.*

"Night Light," the first poem in Nancy Willard's new book of poems, concludes: "It is time to turn on the moon./It is time to live by a different light." The "moon" is china, made in Japan and cost ten dollars; the "different light" is imagination, which plays upon and illuminates common objects until each shines forth in its essential mystery. Snow, soap bubbles, cocoons, an icicle: everything is revealed in wonder, as if newly created. The poet has ushered us into a realm where sacramental and magical are coterminous, where healing and miracle are easily achieved, provided we are patient:

> Mercy is whiter than laundry,
> great baskets of it, piled like
> snowmen . . .
> ("Angels in Winter")

> The coconut turns on me
> its mummy eyes and
> its mummy mouth.
>
> Someone has marked it
> for sacrifice . . .
> ("The Ceremony of the Coconut")

Blake is invoked in the book's second poem, "Vision and Late Supper," and his presence can be felt throughout; clearly, for Willard too, "everything that lives is Holy."

Willard's preferred methods of discourse are proverb ("Who invented water?/*The hands of air, that wanted to wash each other*") and paradox ("Who looks for himself will not find it,/and who sees himself will never know who he sees"). As her title suggests, she is pre-eminently a storyteller, whether her tales take the form of parables, like the memorable "Out of War," or playfully render characters and scenes, as in the fourteen-poem closing sequence, "My Life on the Road with Bread and Water." Action in her poems often involves an unfolding, or a peeling and paring away. We participate, for instance, in the triumphal emergence of the calla lily, "pushed out of the earth/like a note in a bottle." Slicing into a pepper, in "How to Stuff a Pepper," we find we have entered "a moon, spilled like a melon,/a fever of pearls,/a conversation of glaciers." Her metaphors also unfold, or richly succeed themselves: the interior of the pepper "is a temple built to the worship/of morning light."

Birth and death, the subject of many of these poems, are, for Willard, inextricable. In "The Child. The Ring. The Road." the speaker addresses a dying child: "Good-bye, I say, when we touch the door/which winks to receive you/into its corridors, green, so green;/you have glided into a stem." The door image recurs in "Arbor," where, for a woman "at the end of her life," it leads to "another country." In "No Bees. No Fragrance." the poet employs the figure of last fall's lilies to address a dead friend: "Rooted in this world/they have grown out of it./Dear friend, is it this way where you are?" And in "Out of This World I Shall Discover Horses" she speaks raptly of the "two angels hiding in horses" who presided over her birth, guiding her into life: "Tonight in the twilight/I can't tell/horses from angels. Tonight/what carried me into this world/will carry me out of it." In Nancy Willard's world, grace is pervasive, and spirit, like the humble Indian pipe, is "everywhere present,/everywhere unseen."

Like Willard, Charles Simic is a storyteller, but his tales are mordant. "Rosalia" begins typically:

> An especially forlorn human specimen
> Answers a marriage-ad
> On a street of compulsory misfortune,
> One drizzly November afternoon . . .

They are set in landscapes—generally cityscapes—despoiled by history ("Front Tooth Crowned With Gold," "Punch Minus Judy"), and in a climate almost unremittingly harsh. Scarcity is the rule, and practically everyone practices "austerities" of some sort. Even on those rare occasions of abundance, the results are not precisely satisfying:

> We ate so well after the funeral
> In that shack by the town dump;
> Fingers dripping with barbecue sauce
> and grease
> Making the quick sign of the cross
> In the cramped, smoke-filled living
> room . . .
> ("Antediluvian Customs")

Bruce Bennett is a poet who teaches at Wells College in Aurora, New York.

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In "Guardian Angel" the poet refers to "these dark, hell-bent days"; in "Dear Isaac Newton" he declares "the maggots romp/In the Sunday roast." A "born doubter," he has been vouchsafed few signs, and like other nonbelievers has no alternative but to look "both ways at the crossing/At two gusts of nothing and nothing."

Yet, despite the bleakness, the experience of reading *Austerities* is not austere. For one thing, there is abundant humor, albeit of the gallows variety. "Hurricane Season" begins: "Just as the world was ending/We fell in love,/Immoderately." In "Biographical Note" a rat wanders on stage during the performance of a school Christmas play, creating predictable havoc before it is dispatched moments later in the wings. There is a wonderful sardonic quality in "The Great Horned Owl," where "the Grand Seigneur/Is so good as to appear," and the poet makes what he can of this problematic visitation. There is even, in "Old Mountain Road," a fleeting glimpse of something, perhaps, beyond the darkness. But most important, there is the pleasure afforded by the poems themselves: precise and pungent, clean and spare, they make Simic's grim vision more than palatable. □

FILMS.

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Betrayal

Harold Pinter unreels *Betrayal* in reverse, starting when the story has ended and working back to its inception. Its nine chapters move like a dance, two steps backward, one step forward, a design which produces a particular kind of suspense—we are puzzled by the behavior of characters who have gone through experiences about which we are not yet informed. It also bestows an eccentricity of style on a drama that otherwise might seem only too familiar.

Jerry (Jeremy Irons) and Robert (Ben Kingsley) are close friends from university years and business associates, Jerry being a literary agent and Robert a publisher. Both men live in London and are married, with children. Emma (Patricia Hodge) is an art dealer and Robert's wife; when the film opens, she

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is two years out of a seven-year affair with Jerry. In the first episode we see Robert and Emma slap each other. Next day she asks Jerry to meet her at a pub, where she tells him that she is getting a divorce; he is evasive and nervously self-protective. In the last episode, years earlier, Jerry makes Emma a proposal of adultery so absurdly histrionic that one leaves the theater wondering how a woman of her apparent dignity and common sense could have responded to it with other than compassionate amusement.

The film, like the play from which it is taken, goes much deeper than the obvious betrayal of Robert by his wife and his friend. In a sense he is betraying them, since he knows more about the situation than he pretends and seems to be perversely enjoying the subterfuges of the other two. Each of the three is involved in self-betrayal as well, the unstated premise being that the affair is corroding their personalities.

Pinter's dramatic power lies in his dialogue. No one else today writes lines of such precision: clear, simple, in great part banal lines which, in their cadence and more particularly in the silences that fall within and between them, reveal the impulses behind the words. Pinter's dialogue demands subtle intelligence on the part of actors and a virtuoso mastery of timing and vocal inflection. Under David Jones's direction, the cast is superbly in command of the text. Their encounters are vertiginous with ambiguous positions and covert emotions. No one has the advantage.

Jerry, appearing much the youngest of the three, is romantic and impetuous, but lacks bravado for the game he has initiated. The strain of secrecy makes him edgy and unresponsive. For Emma, infidelity seems an affectation, something to be put on or off like a pair of earrings. She runs to the rented flat like an inexperienced girl, but her embraces lack conviction. Before long she seems to be weighing pros and cons as she gazes at her lover; lines of dissatisfaction begin to show at the sides of her mouth. Robert, who has much the fastest mind and sharpest wit of the three, comes alive as he plays cat to the two mice. His laugh is a bark; he professes to care not a whit about what his wife is up to, which, were it true, would make him cruel without cause.

Pinter is aware that people situated as these are speak to avoid talking. It is absorbing and continually exciting to observe how much is revealed. However, at the end—that is, at the beginning—one wonders how much these people have, in fact, been diminished by the initial betrayal. Were the flaws we observe the cause rather than the result of the situation? We cannot be sure because we have not known them before the fact. But the alternative would be to assume that loyalty, responsibility and kindness are virtues always at risk, and that is a view too youthfully cynical for a writer of Pinter's stature. It is a puzzle that sets one to pondering how people build and dismantle their characters, and that, no doubt, is what Pinter intended. □

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Surfaces on the seventh floor
where astronomers will hunch in the bullet end
of the telescope for hours to get the heavens to pose
where frosty, and we slid our way along an outside
balcony to get a dizzy view above the clouds.

Out from that view, a spectacular planet lay off
the question of survival on men and women.
It had its own way—started too far back
to take the measure of and be certain—of
keeping on; our guide held out a thought:

that Earth is itself an organism—
an evolving body. I had already noticed
what height does: "When they start dropping them,
will you survive up here?" He admitted they had a chance.
Meanwhile, light was blanking out most of the larger

telescopes elsewhere. I took two deep breaths
to clear my head of thoughts, and looked again.

Marvin Bell

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A	T	T	U	N	E	S	■	N	O	R	M	A	N	S
C	■	E	■	G	■	S	■	N	■	M	■	M	■	L
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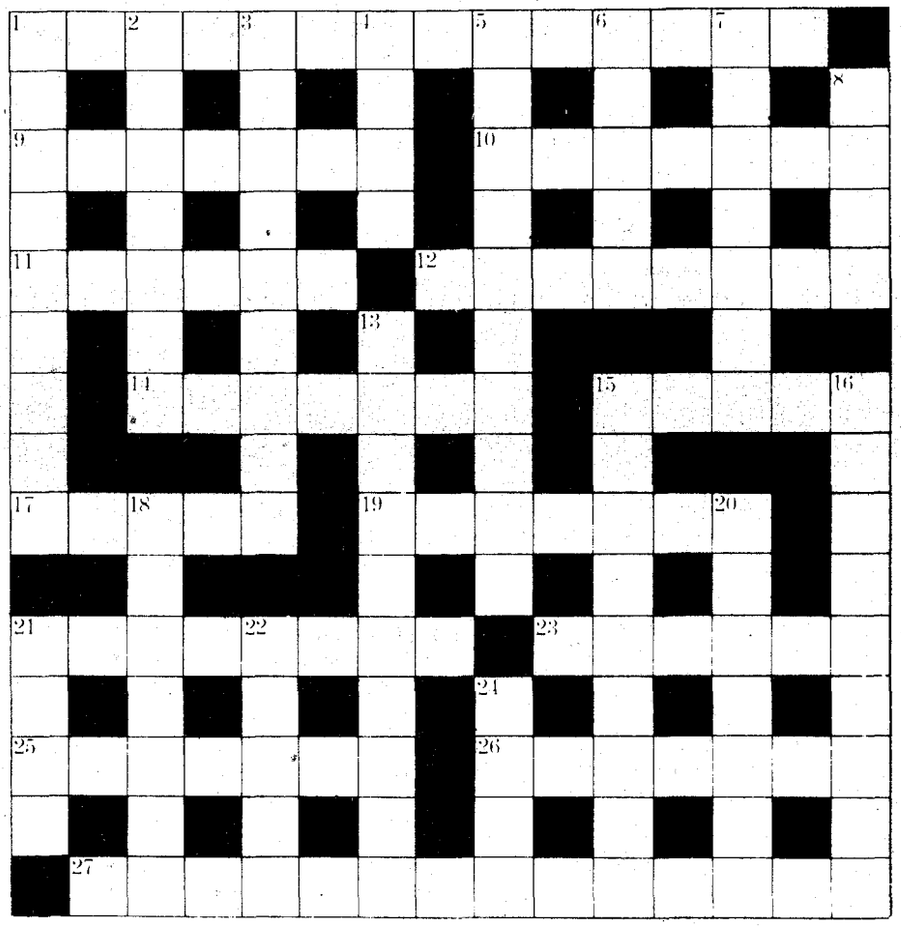

ACROSS

1 Not pre-natal hopes, though woman's is a little better than man's. (4,10)
9 Bad detours—one is perhaps shaken up this way, when flat out. (7)
10 See 11
11 and 10 A water tap shouldn't be both—like an early starter. (3,3,7)
12 Is wed, say, after a fashion, but you can't face up to things like this. (8)
14 What the dentist did for practice? (7)
15 One that gets paid poorly, as they say, with a fork? (5)
17 Slip away from a girl of Argentine and of French connections. (5)
19 A very loud indication in store, possibly, but one tries to make them. (7)
21 Lincoln studied before this, they say, as they start to shoot. (4,4)
23 See 21 down
25 In part, what he got is the one who uses the letter I a lot. (7)
26 Some small afflictions of the left wing, especially. (7)
27 What frustrated bookkeepers try to make is important to the one on the wire. (5,2,7)

DOWN

1 and 22 Golding wasn't talking about a no-errors outfielder with this. (4,2,3,5)
2 Pillows might be found in the duffel, after a false start. (7)
3 Sex? Even it is unusual, but found to be widespread. (9)
4 Puts in a little more writing where they might live in the Village. (4)
5 Europa was like some football players when badly shaken up. (A well-known Nation take-off!) (7,3)
6 On the stage she needs no longer to fetch her weapon. (5)
7 Where someone picked Valentine's Day to 21 across. (7)
8 Middle this? 900 might be the middle of them. (4)
13 Everything a heron takes to get a somewhat fast movement. (10)
15 When in dreadful peril, Anne may be like a flower. (9)
16 A connoisseur might have it, or apple pie, perhaps. (4,5)
18 The sound of a pip? (Varnish might have it.) (7)
20 Such a wedding might not be so common now—but it might start a sporting event. (7)
21 and 23 The last word (or so) in radio communication! (4,3,3)
22 See 1 down
24 As they say, crazy upbringing, but some make such a try. (4)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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